

The Muslim Sunrise

Spring • 2009

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"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)



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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com

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"For the Love of God"

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Al-Zumar 39:50-53

فَإِذَا مَسَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَرَّدَ عَنَّا ذُنْمَرًا إِذَا خَوَلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مُّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَوْتَيْنَاهُ عَلَى
عَلِيهِمْ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّلِكُنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ فَنَّا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَاصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا
وَالَّذِينَ طَلَبُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيِّئَاتُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ
بِمُعْجِزَاتِنَّ أَوْلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِرْزَاقَ فِي
ذَلِكَ لَا يَتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And when trouble touches man, he cries unto Us. But when We bestow on him a favor from Us, he says, 'This has been given to me on account of my own knowledge.' Nay, it is only a trial; but most of them know not.

Those who were before them said the same thing, yet all that they had earned availed them not;

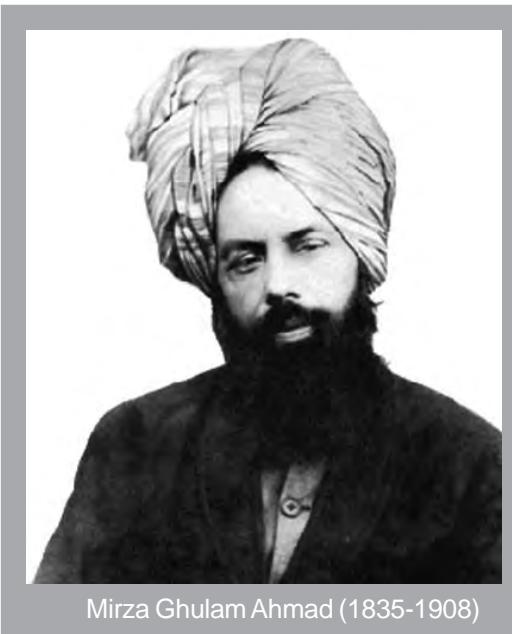
So the evil consequences of what they had earned overtook them; and those who do wrong from among these disbelievers — the evil consequences of what they earned shall also overtake them. They cannot escape.

Know they not that Allah enlarges the provision for whomsoever He pleases, and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases? Verily, in that are Signs for a people who believe.

Opening Commentary

Man is Endowed with a Latent Faculty of Receiving Revelation

As God has endowed man with the faculty of reason for the understanding to some degree of elementary matters, in the same way God has vested in him a hidden faculty of receiving revelation. When human reason arrives at the limit of its reach, at that stage God Almighty, for the purpose of leading His true and faithful servants to the perfection of understanding and certainty, guides them through revelation and visions. Thus, the stages which reason could not traverse are traversed by means of revelation and visions, and seekers after truth thereby arrive at full certainty. This is the way of Allah, to guide to which prophets have appeared in the world and without treading along which no one can arrive at true and perfect understanding; but an unfortunate dry philosopher is so much in a hurry that he desires that whatever has to be disclosed should be disclosed at the stage of reason. He does not know that reason cannot carry a burden beyond its strength, nor can it step forward beyond its capacity. He does not reflect that to carry a person to his desired excellence God Almighty has bestowed upon him not only the faculty of reason but also the faculty of receiving revelation. It is the height of misfortune to make use of only the elementary means out of those that God has, out of His Perfect Wisdom, bestowed upon man for the purpose of recognizing God, and to remain ignorant of the rest. It is foolish to waste those



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

faculties through lack of use and to derive no benefit from them. A person who does not use the faculty of receiving revelation but denies its existence cannot be a true philosopher, whereas the existence of this faculty has been established by the testimony of thousands of the righteous and all men of true understanding have arrived at perfect understanding through this means (*Surma Chashm Arya* (Qadian, 1886), Now published in *Ruhani Khazain*, Volume 2 (London, 1984) Arya, pp. 39-42).

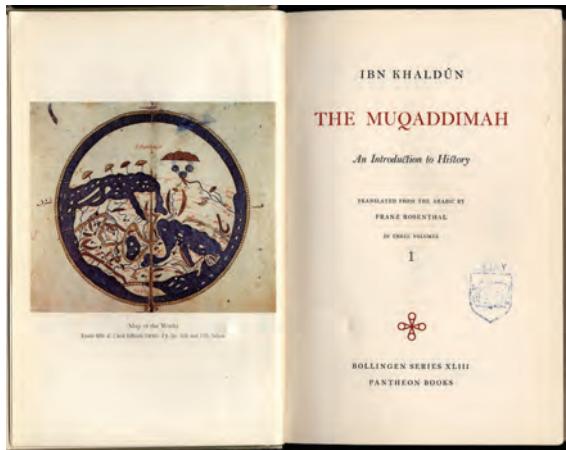
Revelation Provides Comfort in Distress

It is idle to assert that revelation has no reality and is a vain thing, the harm of which is greater than its benefit. Such an assertion is made only by a person who has never tasted this pure wine and does not desire that he should acquire true faith. Such a one is happy with his habits and customs and never seeks to find out to what degree he believes in God Almighty and how far his understanding extends and what should he do so that his inner weaknesses are removed and a living change takes place in his morals and actions and designs. He is not eager to

cultivate that love which should make his journey to the other world easy and whereby he should develop the inner quality of making spiritual progress.

Everyone can understand that in this heedless life which is ever pulling a person downward, with his relationship with wife and children and with the burden of honor and good repute, which are all like heavy stones pressing him downwards, he is in need of a high power which, by bestowing true sight and true vision upon him, should make him eager to behold the Perfect Beauty of God Almighty. That high power is divine revelation that provides comfort in distress. It enables a person to take his stand joyously and comfortably under mountains of misfortunes. That Imperceptible Being, Who confounds reason and the wisdom of all philosophers, manifests Himself only through revelation. He comforts the hearts of seekers and bestows contentment upon them and revives the half-dead ones by saying: I am Present. It is true that the Holy Qur'an contains all the guidance, but when the Qur'an leads a person to the fountain of guidance the first indication of it is that he begins to experience converse with the Divine, whereby a revealing understanding of high degree and a visible blessing and light is created and that cognition begins to be acquired which cannot be achieved by blind following or through intellectual theories, for they are all limited and full of doubts and defective and incomplete. We need to extend our cognition directly, for the greater our cognition the greater will be our eagerness. With a defective cognition we cannot expect perfect eagerness. It is a matter of surprise how unintelligent those people are who do not consider themselves in need of that perfect means of approaching the truth upon which spiritual life depends. It should be remembered that spiritual knowledge and spiritual understanding can be acquired only through revelation and visions, and until we achieve that standard of light, our humanness cannot acquire any true understanding or true perfection....

Editorial



A spiritual transformation: The Golden Age of Islam

Before the advent of Islam, the desert Arabs were not known for their education, scientific research, secular or spiritual knowledge. Most of the general public was illiterate and followed their customs and traditions, some of which were inhumane and cruel. Their nobles would bury their newborn daughters alive. Drinking alcohol, womanizing and pursuing vulgar activities was common behavior. Tribes would get into feudal wars with each other over petty issues that would go on for generations.

A revolutionary change was brought in the Arabian Peninsula by the Prophet of Islam^{SAW}. He abolished drinking, established respect for women and created brotherhood among the various tribes in his very lifetime. He promoted education in various ways, changing the whole focus of Arabian society. People who were looked down upon by the international community were on their way to lead the world in all aspects of human life.

After the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} passed away, his four caliphs^{RA} continued to work on the path of bringing about change and they increased the sphere in which the excellence of Islamic teachings started to shine.

The Holy Qur'an commanded Muslims to spread throughout the world and experience the vastness of God's creation. Holy Qur'an encouraged them to explore nature and study the workings of the sun, the moon and the stars.

Within a few hundred years, a relatively short span in history, Muslims became the educators of the world. They were the pioneers of new discoveries in medicine, mathematics, physics, history, music, geography, astrology and civil and military administration. There are numerous Muslims over the centuries who changed the course of the world in their respective fields of expertise. In the Western countries, Saladin (Salah-ud-Din Ayyubi) is well known for his military administration and excellence of character and generosity, and was admired by his worst of enemies. Ibn Battuta, as a

historian, opened doors of international borders that were previously unknown across the globe. Numerous other Muslim scholars are not acknowledged by the West but their work formed the foundation upon which the West based its research and knowledge.

Today, it is incomprehensible for a Westerner to even think that Muslims could be anything other than terrorists, let alone the leaders in secular knowledge. In the current issue, we have provided examples of a few notable Muslims who brought change in various fields of knowledge. They were the pioneers who set up the stage that eventually brought Europe out of the Dark Ages. The governments of Spain and Turkey promoted education, research and scientific knowledge without prejudice to any faith, race, color or creed. It was a period known as the *Golden Age of Islam*.

Muslims need to remind themselves of the past scholars and advancements made by them. By following the teachings of the Holy Qur'an about exploration and seeking the bounties of God, they can demonstrate to the world once again that they are capable of leading the world. Their strength lies in the Islamic spiritual fundamentals that combine with secular knowledge and result in leadership in various fields which cannot be achieved by secular knowledge alone. Once again, they can prove to the people who look down upon them that they have been given the tools, means and principles by which they can change the world for a better future. ♦

Pakistan: A nation of persecution and barbarity

Summary of Friday Sermon

Delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad ^{aba}, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

March 6, 2009

NOTE: Alislam Team takes full responsibility for any errors or miscommunication in this Synopsis of the Friday Sermon. For our readers, the Khalifah is affectionately referred to as Huzur.

In his Friday Sermon today Huzur gave a discourse on a range of exhortations of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) to the Community. The advice pertain to drawing attention towards the objective of forming the Community, the ensuing responsibilities of the members of the Community, the blessings resulting from attaining the said objectives and finally, the ultimate goal of the Community. Huzur said his purpose to present these today was to remind us of our responsibilities so that we may continue to ruminate and ponder over them to attain Divine nearness and Divine pleasure.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said this age is of spiritual warfare. The battle with Satan is on -he wants to defeat Islam, however God has brought about the Ahmadiyya movement in order to vanquish Satan. Blessed are those who recognize this. Huzur said we are grateful that we are enabled, either through the insight of our elders or ourselves, to enter into this Community. He said the people are going to continue to enter into this Community to be part of that special group of people who are to fight the last battle with Satan. Huzur said in some countries of the world our Community faces persecution, however, in relation to the attainment of our objectives the sacrifices that are made are naught. Indeed, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) told us that we will have to endure trials and tribulations. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that his followers have to fight an incredible battle with 'self' as the world around them is hostile and openly curses them. However, the reward for their steadfastness lies with God.

Huzur said today such is the situation in some countries of the world and those who are making sacrifices amidst the persecution will have their reward with God. Opposition is mounting in Pakistan and in India there is a lot



"Since the new government came into power in Pakistan persecution [of Ahmadis] is considered a meritorious act, the government has given the mullah a free reign. There is no law and order in the country anyway and whatever passes for law and order is not available for the Ahmadis to seek help from."

of persecution of the new converts. Since the new government came into power in Pakistan persecution [of Ahmadis] is considered a meritorious act, the government has given the mullah a free reign. There is no law and order in the country anyway and whatever passes for law and order is not available for the Ahmadis to seek help from. It is a blessing of God that each time our opponents hatch a large-scale scheme against us, their plans are rebounded on them by God. This is what we have been witnessing for quite a few years now. A large-scale scheme against us is in the making these days but God has created such a situation that they find they are in trouble themselves. Huzur reminded us that this is the last battle with Satan, we should strengthen our faiths, supplicate for steadfastness to God, demonstrate patience and fortitude and turn to Him.

Huzur said it is worth remembering that in

order to overcome the external Satan we have to conquer the internal satan as well. Our triumph will not be through worldly ways and means rather it will be through prayers and for this is it essential to tread the path of God's pleasure which necessitates Jihad of the 'self'.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said egotistic tendencies are shirk (associating partners with God) and they shut hearts. One should ever engage in promoting the Unity of God and never disregard the intent with which one comes into bai'at [of the Promised Messiah]. He said God started this Community so that He would demonstrate taqwa (righteousness) and purity to the world.

Huzur added, today Muslims are killing Muslims in the name of God. The situation of the country that was acquired in the name of Islam so that religion may be established is such that people are killed there for professing their declaration of faith (Kalima) and today the world envisages Pakistan synonymous with persecu-



tion and barbarity. May God have mercy on our country. The Community made great sacrifices for the establishment of this country, each Pakistani Ahmadi should always be mindful of this. Today, if anyone can save the country from the storm of sin and depravation, it is the vessel which has been prepared by the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). We are on board this vessel and have to make ourselves worthy of it. We should pray for the nation of Pakistan that may it come to its senses. These are the two significant responsibilities of Ahmadis, in particular Pakistani Ahmadis or the Ahmadis residing in places where the situation is bad.

Huzur said at times Ahmadis who are blessed with prosperity forget the objective of being an Ahmadi and are not mindful of the teachings of Islam, and are neglectful of many things, for example observance of Salat. Huzur said it is a sobering thought. May God not make even a single person among us a portrayal of the Quranic verse ‘...he is surely not of thy family; he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct...’ (11:47). Huzur said that may Allah never ever make it so that anyone among those taking their bai’at fits this description. May we not presume and create our own measures of attaining the standards the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) expected from us, rather

may we always strive to attain the standards set by our Imam.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said none can attain salvation without adopting taqwa. All claims to piety are futile without adherence to high standards of obedience and practising sincere humility. He said if our Community really want to become a true Community they have to undergo a death-like state (annihilate the self), give precedence to God and always assess oneself and endeavour to reform oneself. Huzur said the endeavour to reform succeeds when there is an absence of inflexibility and a realization that having joined the Community one’s objective is to present a pious model to the world and to purify oneself to seek the pleasure of God.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that each stranger who meets Ahmadis observes the way they carry themselves, their ethics and manners. If he does not find them to be fine, he stumbles because of the Ahmadi. Therefore it is essential to exemplify honesty and truth.

Huzur said this is summary of the objectives of our Community. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said God is preparing a community of the truthful. We should continually assess ourselves, this creates a realization and insight to improve and then

turns us to God because it is not possible to tread these paths without the grace of God. May Allah make it so that each one of us abides by taqwa. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that it is the will of God to save man from the fire of sin and create a group of the righteous who would give precedence to faith over the world. Huzur prayed that may Allah make each one of us give precedence to faith over the world and truly belong to the group of the righteous and understand the basis of bai’at and never overlook the Divine commandments for egotistic reasons. Huzur prayed that may we be exemplary so that our generations also tread the right path and supplicate to God. May those who accept Ahmadiyyat through us pray for their benefactors. InshaAllah

the Community is destined to grow and flourish, we have been witnessing for more than one hundred years that the hand of God’s mercy is upon us and each year hundreds of thousands of pious souls enter into the Community, may Allah grant steadfastness to the newcomers.

Huzur said he has said it a few times before that as we increase in numbers feelings of jealousy is also growing among our adversaries. Their mind-set and their wish is for the Community to be destroyed, however, God’s blessings on us are ever on the increase. May He continue to cover our shortcomings with His grace and make every assault of the enemy unsuccessful. All our accomplishments are by virtue of the promise God gave the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and this is why the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) always gave assurance to the Community. Ascendancy will be given to us, InshaAllah, however, may we not be negligent in the hour of ascendancy. May God enable each Ahmadi to fulfil their responsibilities, enable them to meet all the expectations of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), save us from each of the evil about which the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) expressed concern and may we continue to be the recipients of his prayers.



Munir Hamid, Naib Ameer

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
1938-2009

“His ardent love for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was such that each time he mentioned his name he would be in tears. He had great love for the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and devotion to the Khulafa. He was one of those people who are specially guided by Allah.”

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad ^{aba} Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community mourns the loss of Munir Hamid Sahib who passed away February 21, 2009, in Philadelphia (*To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return*). He is survived by his wife, a son, and two daughters.

Born on June 1, 1938, Hamid grew up in Pennsylvania. He converted to Islam at the early age of 15 years old. Despite opposition to his new faith, Hamid persevered as he meandered through the many difficulties and hardships that Christian converts encounter with family and friends.

During his youth, Hamid was a community activist in the Philadelphia area, as he began to preach the message of Islam in the African American community.

After a stint in the United States Air Force, Hamid returned to his native home where he continued to study and preach Islam. In 1969, he was appointed as the first National Qaid for Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya USA, a branch of the community for youth and young adults.

For 25 years, he worked as a supervisor at a facility owned and operated by Temple University, dedicated to helping mentally challenged children. Also during this time, he served as local president for the Philadelphia Ahmadiyya Community from 1977 until 2001.

Hamid, who was known for his passionate and emotional speeches, was appointed Naib (Vice) Ameer of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA in 1997. Hamid has visited several countries including Bangladesh, Bahrain, India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

In Search of A New Financial Order

By Atif Mian

The current global financial crisis is by far the worst the world has seen since the Great Depression. Americans are watching their retirement savings erode by a third to one half at a time when they are also losing their jobs at an alarming rate. The entire banking system is in shambles with many banks practically insolvent and looking towards the government for life support. How did the world's most advanced financial system become so dysfunctional? Why is there no end in sight despite the government's many efforts? And most importantly, does the current crisis bring to the surface some fundamental flaws in the traditional financial arrangements? I will touch upon these issues below.

The Origins Of The Crisis: Household Leverage

Figure I plots household leverage ratio over time for the U.S., i.e. total household debt divided by total wages. While household leverage was stable from 1995 till 2000 at about 1.8, it increased at an unprecedented rate over the next six years. Americans were borrowing twice as much per dollar of income in 2007 compared to 2000.

Perhaps households borrowed so much in the hope of finding an ever more willing buyer for their houses, or perhaps they simply succumbed to the temptation to consume

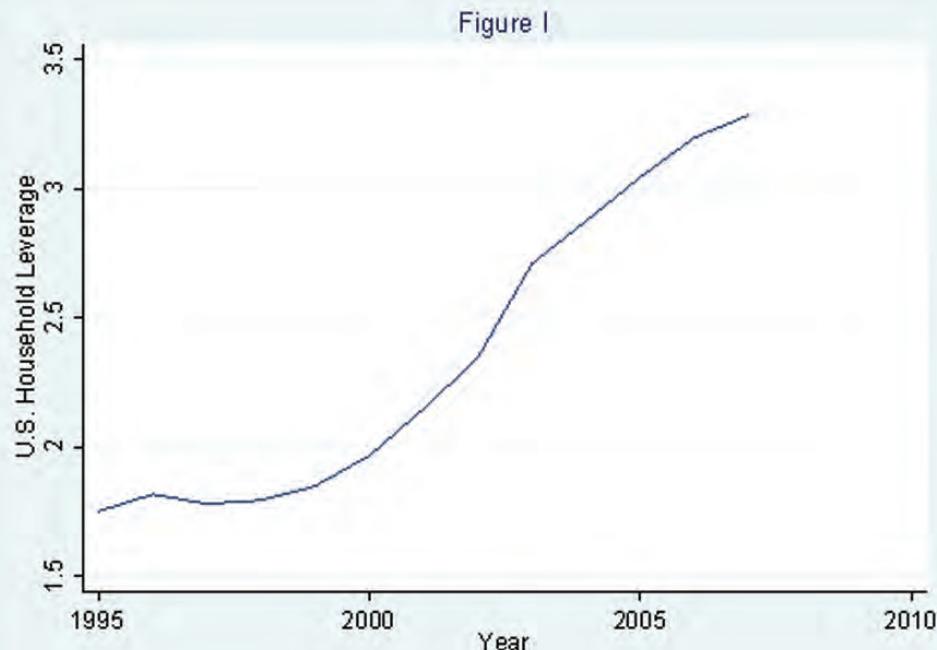


Figure I plots household leverage ratio over time for the U.S., i.e. total household debt divided by total wages.

in the face of easy credit. We do not know the real intention of borrowers, but what we do know is that households borrowed in a way that had never been seen before. In particular, households with declining real incomes (e.g. subprime borrowers) increased their borrowing the most. People borrowed increasingly higher amounts even when their incomes declined!!

Why did America borrow so aggressively post-2000? A possible clue comes from the unfettered willingness of fast growing Asian economies and other oil-rich countries to loan their surplus cash to the U.S. in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. From 2000 till 2007, U.S. received a net inflow of over 6 trillion dollars in borrowed money².

The incoming creditors were only interested in holding "safe" U.S. debt. This sparked off a large industry among investment banks to somehow create new AAA ("risk free") securities from existing risky American mortgages. How does one create risk free debt from risky mortgages with a non-trivial probability of default? The elixir was to be found in a process known as securitization.

Securitization is the act of pooling together hundreds of mortgages into a single entity, and then slicing it into "tranches" to be sold separately. As an example, suppose we have a hundred low-income households, each taking out a hundred thousand dollar mortgage. The combined pool of these mort-

gages will be worth ten million dollars. Suppose that historically ten percent of low-income households default on their payments. This is too high a default risk for most large financial institutions (e.g. Chinese central bank, large pension funds) to bear. Therefore, investment banks came up with the idea to slice the ten million dollar combination of mortgages into tranches such that the top most tranche would be the last to bear any loss.

In our example, the ten million dollar pool may be cut into a "senior" and "junior" tranche of five million dollars each. If 10 percent of the mortgages default, the entire loss will be borne by the Junior tranche. In other words, the loss would have to be greater than 5 million dollars for the senior tranche to bear any loss. The senior tranches were often given the best "AAA" ratings by rating agencies, allowing large financial institutions that already had all the capital coming in, to buy them.

One of the problems with securitization was that rating agencies gladly gave "AAA" ratings even when the underlying mortgages far from deserved such confidence. Investment banks were happy to market these AAA securities for the fees they were making, the government did not want to intervene because the credit boom was helping keep the economy afloat, and for a while it all made sense as house prices, themselves driven by the credit surge, kept going up.

The Propagation Of The Crisis: Banking Leverage

The borrowing frenzy fed on itself for a while. However, it became apparent by 2007 that many households did not have the income to continue making their monthly mortgage payments. Consequently, default rates rose to record levels and banks found themselves holding onto mortgage assets worth a lot less than they had originally assumed. Soon there was panic in the marketplace as investors wondered which of the banks were sitting on negative net worth.

However, as bad as the mortgage crisis was, the total losses in the U.S. economy today far exceed the total likely losses in the mortgage sector. For example, the U.S. stocks alone have lost over 7 trillion dollars, an amount greater than even the most extreme estimate of likely mortgage losses. Why are total losses to the economy so much more than the original losses in the mortgage sector? The answer lies in the leverage of financial institutions.

Banks all over the world operate on the principle of leverage. The idea is to put around 5 dollars of your own money (i.e. equity of bank owners) and then borrow another 95 through debt (e.g. through depositors and other debt holders of banks). The bank in this example is 95% levered³. The bank would use some of the 100 dollars it has as loans to businesses and the rest to buy assets such as mortgage securities.

Due to the high leverage however, if the bank loses 5 dollars on its total investment of 100, it stands to lose *all* of its equity and go bankrupt. This in essence is what has happened to the U.S. financial sector. Their 5 dollars of equity has been wiped out by mortgage defaults, and with no equity left in the banks, depositors and others are not willing to give new credit to banks. There is thus great hesitancy among banks today to lend to each other, something they do quite easily under normal circumstances.

Once banks find it difficult to borrow new capital, they stop lending to others as well, causing businesses at large to suffer. The impact is even worse if they start calling back some of their existing loans. In our example

above, a loss of 5 dollars has the potential to drive down the remaining 95 dollars of assets along with it as well. This is the devastating multiplier effect of bank leverage.



The Fundamental Problem: Inadequate Risk Sharing

The interaction of problems in household leverage with bank leverage has created a serious economic crisis the world over. While not much can be done about the past excesses of the household or banking sector, the primary challenge in front of policy makers today is how to stop the vicious cycle of leverage destroying economic value.

Our inability to stop the economy from bleeding is in large part due to the over indulgence of the household and banking sector on leverage, i.e. borrowing that guarantees the creditor that no matter what happens they will get their principal and interest back. In other words, there is no risk sharing between the borrower and its creditor. As I explained in the bank leverage example, an excessive reliance on this type of financing implies that relatively small losses can make the borrower bankrupt and start a domino effect that works like a tsunami wiping out an economy's capacity to produce.

What we need is a financial system that promotes the sharing of risk between borrowers and creditors. While this is a very involved and detailed topic, the value of greater risk-sharing can be understood from a simple example. Suppose that instead of the traditional fixed-interest contracts, debt

owed by households or banks had a "convertibility clause" in it such that in the event of a large downturn (or reduction in home prices), a borrower's debt obligations would have automatically lowered to prevent unnecessary bankruptcies and foreclosures.

In this alternative financial arrangement, banks would not have to be bailed out and the housing market would not collapse under the weight of foreclosures. With better risk-sharing mechanisms, we might have had a mild slowdown today, but nothing like the free fall the economy is currently under. In fact there is a good chance that if we had contracts with better risk-sharing provisions up front, we could have avoided the excessive borrowing of household and banks in the first place.

The reason is that putting in risk-sharing clauses into financial contracts forces the financial system to do more work. For example, lenders have to be more careful in evaluating the sustainability of underlying house prices and borrowers' income potential. The net result is that there is greater revelation of information in the financial system (i.e. more transparency) as well as a greater incentive to look for borrowers with sound fundamentals.

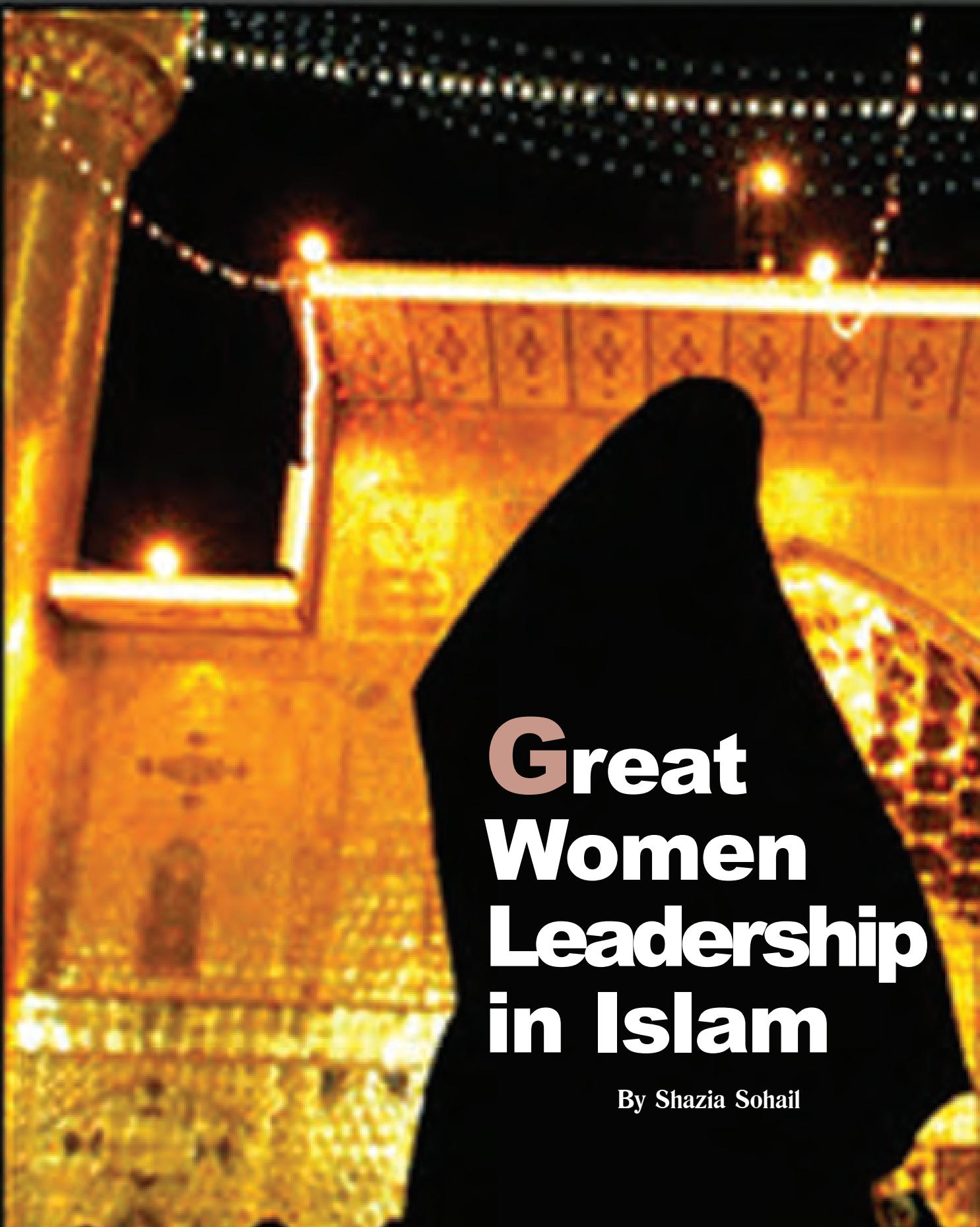
The push for better risk-sharing arrangements in the financial system should be familiar to those acquainted with the Islamic philosophy of financial contracting. The Qur'an warns against the destructive power of leverage by referring to its adverse consequences as "war from Allah" (2:280). It also encourages the adoption of better risk-sharing contracts by advising creditors that "if the debtor be in straitened circumstances, then grant him respite till a time of ease." (2:281) Perhaps it's time we move in that direction.

(Footnotes)

¹ More detailed analysis regarding the origins of the current financial crisis can be found in "The consequences of mortgage credit expansion: Evidence from the U.S. mortgage default crisis" by Atif Mian and Amir Sufi, forthcoming in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

² Interestingly, the amount of net inflow into the U.S. (6 trillion) is almost equivalent to the increase in household leverage over the same period.

³ Some banks like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers were levered at even higher rates.



Great Women Leadership in Islam

By Shazia Sohail

Leadership, as defined by a Muslim Woman

When talking about leadership in reference to Muslim women one must keep in mind that she defines her success in terms very different from those of the ordinary man. In everyday life she defers to, and actively seeks to promote, the authority of the various male figures in her life, namely her father, brother, husband, and her son. How many times have we heard *behind every great man there is a great woman?* But how many times have we stopped to think what that means and why that is the case?

We heard about the controversy over whether a Muslim woman could be an imam and lead a prayer service with men standing behind her, and perhaps came away feeling sorry for her for she seems to be denied the right to shine in a position of prominence. What most people fail to realize is that standing in the limelight is perhaps the position most abhorrent to a Muslim woman. She loves none as much as she loves her Lord, and finds that the feeling of nearness to Him is most enhanced when her being is hidden from the eyes of others; this is where she finds true paradise. That is not always the case for men, which is why the definition of leadership, as applied to men, is completely false when it comes to a Muslim woman.

The words of the Holy Prophet^{saw} “Paradise lies under the feet of a mother” are in fact an extrapolation from a verse of the Holy Qur'an:

“And one of His Signs is this, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect.” (30:22)

This verse is in effect telling her that she is innately gifted with the ability to promote peace. Her challenge lies in figuring out the best way to achieve that, and it varies from woman to woman. Her acute awareness of her responsibility to create peace and beauty in her environment so compassionate men and women can emerge from it defines her concept of leadership. She thus defines her success in terms of the physical, moral, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well-being of those she has raised, influenced, or nurtured. And since motherhood is defined by the ability to care for, and influence, the wives of the Prophets are referred to as *The Mothers of the Faithful*.

A Muslim woman finds inspiration to be an exceptional leader in the following words of the Holy Qur'an:

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah has full knowledge of all things.” (33:41)

Meaning, it is a greater honor to be a ‘Seal,’ having the ability to leave your impress upon others, than to be a genetic parent. In this regard I will cite the examples of a couple of great Muslim women who left a deep impress upon the consciousness of people around them and brought about revolutionary changes in society by redefining modes of conduct.

Hadhrat Khadija

Hadhrat Khadija^{RA} became a leader among women by exhibiting unparalleled devotion and loyalty to her husband, the Holy Prophet^{saw}, at a time when he was at his weakest and most persecuted. Despite

being wealthy in her own right she voluntarily gave over all her wealth and slaves to him knowing that he would free them all immediately, thus accepting a life of poverty. She exhibited firm faith in his truthfulness and was by his side through austerity and starvation. The Holy Prophet^{saw} could always count on her to see the bright side of a situation even through his darkest hour. He is reported to have said: “Whenever I heard something unpleasant from the disbelievers I would mention it to Khadija^{RA}. She would console me in such a manner that my heart would be at peace, and there wasn't any sorrow that would not become easy or light with Khadija's comments.”¹

One only has to look at her day to day life to understand why the Holy Prophet^{saw} remained utterly devoted to a woman 15 years his senior for the entire 25 years they were together. His loyalty to her knew no bounds and continued long after she passed away. He never failed to praise her whenever the occasion demanded, which was almost daily, even when he knew that his subsequent wives did not particularly like to have their husband talking about a deceased elderly woman. This ‘Mother of the Faithful’ provided the greatest service to Islam, the religion of peace, by demonstrating how to enable the spread of goodness in society through perfect marital and domestic harmony.

Hadhrat Ayesha

Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA} has the distinction of exhibiting the rightly-guided heart (*qalb-e-saleem*) under conditions of relative physical comfort but potential mental anguish. Having come into marriage with the Holy Prophet^{saw} at a very young and impressionable age she accepted a very deep imprint of his character upon a clean and pure heart. One has to wonder what it was about her that made the Holy Prophet^{saw} respond to a questioner that out of all the people in the world Ayesha^{RA} was the dearest to him, and out of all the men in the world Ayesha's father was the dearest to him.² It was indeed the purity of her heart and mind that was even attested to by God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an in the words:

“Verily, those who accuse chaste, unwary, believing women are

cursed in this world and the Hereafter. And for them is a grievous chastisement.” (24:24)

This verse, and the context of its revelation, sheds light on the spiritual status of Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA}. Despite having spent a night stranded in the wilderness of a forest, through no fault of her own, and being rescued by and entering the town with a stranger, she fully expected God Himself to absolve her of any wrongdoing, which He promptly did by revealing the above verse affirming her innocence and purity.³

She stands out for her many great accomplishments. It was her deep and clear understanding of issues, grasp of commandments, and intellectual diligence that made her the educator of men and women alike for decades after the Holy Prophet^{SAW} passed away. She demonstrated how to see the best in people despite the existence of natural rivalry. She became the selfless source of passing onto her spiritual progeny the positive aspects of her rivals to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}'s love. Here are some of the things she had to say about her competitors:

“I was not envious of any wife of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} to the extent that I envied Hadhrat Khadija^{RA}, even though I had not even seen her, because the Holy Prophet^{SAW} spoke about her very frequently. Oftentimes he would slaughter a goat and send it piece by piece to the family and friends of Khadija^{RA}. If I ever said that it was as if there was no woman in the world other than Khadija^{RA} he would reply, ‘She was indeed such a person. She was indeed such a person, and she is my wife in this world and the next, and my progeny is from her.’⁴

It is no wonder that Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA} is known by the title of *Siddiqah*, meaning the truthful woman. The people around her were fully cognizant of the fact that she never glossed over the truth as she saw it, even if it presented her in an unflattering light.

Hadhrat Sauda^{RA}, the Holy Prophet^{SAW}'s second wife, who was also elderly, loved Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA} so much that she granted her own turn to spend the night with the Holy Prophet^{SAW} to her, which she willingly

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accepted. She said about Hadhrat Sauda^{RA}, “I have never seen a woman devoid of the feeling of rivalry other than Sauda^{RA}.” At another place she says, “Other than Sauda^{RA} I have never felt with any other woman that my heart beats in her chest.”⁵ It seems that to know Ayesha^{RA} was to love her.

It was the love of God which was behind the Holy Prophet^{SAW}'s exceptional love for Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA}. When his other wives asked him to demand equal treatment of all his wives from his followers, he ignored their request twice. Upon being asked the third time he was compelled to say, “By God! I have never received a revelation on any of your beds, but on Ayesha's bed God talks to me. Therefore, how can you expect to be treated equal to her.”⁶

A few years after the passing of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, Hadhrat Ayesha^{RA} led an army of 30,000 men in the Battle of Jamal for a cause which she considered to be just at the time. Although she later found out that she had been misled, and deeply regretted taking this action in the later part of her life, she did set an incontrovertible example of a woman's prerogative to take firm and bold action if she believes that to be the right thing to do.

Conclusion

Subsequent to the era of the dawn of Islam numerous Muslim women held positions of power and influence from which they spread peace and harmony all around them through their piety, philanthropy, and exceptional training of children. Notable among these are Hadhrat Nusrat Jahan Begum, Nawab Mubarka Begum, Hadhrat Sayyeda Maryam Begum, Hadhrat Husain Bibi, and the list goes on. One thing they all had in common was their fervent love for God Almighty and His Prophet^{SAW}.

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By Naureen Choudhry

If it had to be summarized in a single sentence who Rabi'a al-Basri was, the following statement would come quite close: Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, a woman from Basra who rejected worship motivated by the desire for heavenly reward or the fear of punishment and insisted on the love of God as the sole valid form of adoration. But this statement, although accurate and precise, would not do justice to the life of such a prominent Muslim Sufi woman from early Islamic history. Because she was born in an era when history was not recorded as a norm, some fictions revolve around her life story. Nonetheless, the facts presented in this article are taken from the popular historical account known about her.

It is said that Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, or Rabi'a al-Qaysiyya, was born in Basra (modern day Iraq) between the years 95 AH and 99 AH (around 717CE). Her father's name was Ismail (of Syria), who after getting married, went to live with his wife on the edge of the desert not far from the town of Basra. After a while, Allah Almighty blessed them with a daughter and the father named her Rabi'a. Then they had another daughter whom he also named Rabi'a ath-thani (Rabi'a the Second), and a third daughter as well was named Rabi'a ath-



thalatha (Rabi'a the Third), and yet again another daughter whom he named Rabi'a arabi'a (Rabi'a the Fourth), who was to become the beloved Saint of Allah.

Although she belonged to one of the noble families of Basra, she was born in the poorest of homes and her father was a humble servant of God. The family faced much hardship and when Rabi'a was a little older, her mother and father died and she was left an orphan. A famine occurred in Basra and the sisters were scattered. One day when Rabi'a was walking abroad, and evil-minded man saw her and seized upon her and sold her as a slave for six dirhams and the man who bought her made

her work hard. Rabi'a's master took her to Baghdad where he immediately set about using her in the way that was most profitable for himself. She was very beautiful and she also had a lovely voice, so her master taught her how to sing and play the 'oud, made her dance and entertain people, and above all, to make money for himself. He sent her to weddings and celebrations where she would dance and sing, and the people would give her money for whatever they wanted from her. In this way she came to have many bad habits and ways, living a very low life amongst all sorts of people and not caring about anything that she did.

This continued until she was about thirty-

six years old, when one day as she was singing at a wedding she found herself singing in a different way. Songs were coming from her heart for her Beloved Who was her true Love because now Allah, the All-Mighty, had awakened Rabi'a. From that moment she left everything that she had been doing before, and she refused to sing or dance, or play any music for anyone except for her Beloved God. This made her master very angry because he could no longer use her to make money for himself. He began to chastise her hoping that this would frighten her into returning to her former ways. But she refused. She had begun to pray all through the night, crying to her Beloved God to help her in her desperate state. Rabi'a carried out her appointed tasks and in the service of God she was standing on her feet from night until dawn. Rabi'a's master decided to sell her. So he put a cord around her neck and took her to the slave market of Baghdad. There a holy man took Rabi'a to his home, gave her food and simple clothes, and told her that he did not want anything from her, except that she could pray and be free in his house. Rabi'a thanked him with all her heart and said, "If you want anything from me for the Face of Allah, He will give you your reward, but if you want anything from me for yourself only, I have nothing to give you. I have everything that I need from my Beloved God and I do not need anything from any human being."

The holy man replied that he would like to marry her, and to free her from being a slave, but that he did not ask anything from her except what she wanted to give. Rabi'a thanked him for his kindness and consideration, and she said that she did not want to marry anyone, but was grateful for the way that he cared for her in her deep need. For Rabi'a's case was that she had heard the Voice of her Beloved Who was Allah and none other than He, and she had no need for any earthly husband.

Like many of the ascetic sufis, Rabi'a made no separation in her love between man and woman if they loved her Beloved God. Many people loved her and needed her and wanted to take from her something of the special Gift which she had been given from Allah. She had many followers who yearned to feed themselves from her Love which she gave to all those whom she loved. She never married nor did she have any children but as she said, "My peace is in solitude but my Beloved is always with me. Whenever I witness His Beauty He is my prayer niche (mihrab); toward Him is my qibla. Oh Healer of souls, the heart feeds upon its desire and its striving

towards Union with You has healed my soul. You are my Joy and my Life to Eternity. You were the Source of my life; from You came my ecstasy. I have separated myself from all created beings, for my hope is for Union with You; for that is the Goal of my searching."

Not only did Rabi'a never marry but she also never had a Shaykh to guide and instruct her. She received everything that she knew directly from Allah without the intermediary of any Shaykh. At about this time she left Baghdad and returned to Basra where she remained for many years. Rabi'a once said that there are three kinds of men: The first believes that his hands and his sons' hands are all that is necessary to succeed in the only world they know: the material world. The second kind prays with his hands so that a reward will be earned in the next life. The third kind has his hands tied at the wrist, bound with love to serve without thought of return. Her life and sayings became a source of deep inspiration and yearning for many who came after her. Her life gave life to the hearts of those beloved people of Allah who followed after her in the same Line of the Love of God, as she had done. Particularly, this was the case later for Abu Bayazid al-Bistami, Abu'l-Husayn an-Nuri, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, and Abu Bakr ash-Shibli, who, around their leader and Master al-Junayd, came to be known as *The Baghdad School*.

Once Rabi'a fasted for a whole week, neither eating nor sleeping. All night she prayed and became very hungry. Then a visitor came bringing her a bowl of food. She accepted it and went to fetch a lamp. When she returned, she found that a cat had overturned the bowl of food. She then said to herself: "I will fetch a jug of water and break my fast by drinking." But by the time she had fetched the jug, the lamp had gone out. She then tried to drink the water in the dark, but the jug slipped from her hand and broke into pieces. She lamented and sighed so much, "that it was to be feared that the whole house would be consumed with fire!" "O Allah!" she cried, "What is this that You are doing with this helpless slave?" Then she heard a voice say, "Be careful lest you desire Me to bestow on you all worldly blessings, but take away from your heart the caring for Me, for care for Me and worldly blessings can never be together in a single heart. Rabi'a, you desire one thing and I desire another. My desire and your desire can never be joined in one heart." She said then, "When I heard this admonition I so cut off my heart from the world and curtailed my desires that whenever I have

prayed during the last thirty years I have thought it to be my last prayer."

Rabi'a said:

**"Everyone prays to You from
fear of the Fire;
And if You do not put them in
the Fire,
This is their reward.
Or they pray to You for the
Garden,
Full of fruits and flowers.
And that is their prize.
But I do not pray to You like
this,
For I am not afraid of the
Fire,
And I do not ask You for the
Garden.
But all I want is the Essence
of Your Love,
And to return to be One with
You,
And to become Your Face."**

It was told of Rabi'a that she was seen one day carrying a brand of fire in one hand and a pitcher of water in the other, and that she was running very fast. When they asked her what she was doing and where she was going, she said, "I am going to light a fire in the Garden and pour water onto Hell so that both these veils may disappear from the seekers, and that their purpose may be sure, and that the slaves of Allah may see Him, without any object of hope or motive of fear. What if the Hope for the Garden and the Fear of the Fire did not exist? Not one would worship his Lord, nor obey Him. But He is worthy of worship without any immediate motive or need."

One of her companions, Sufyan al-Thawri, asked her, "What is the best thing for the servant to do who desires proximity to his Lord?" She said, "That the servant should possess nothing in this world for the Next, save Him."

Rabi'a never had any doubts about her Beloved being present or absent, because she

was not concerned only to have His good pleasure and bounties. She lived for a Love which does not seek for any answer, reward or reciprocity. It was related how one day one of her followers said in her presence, "Oh Allah, may You be satisfied with us!" Whereupon Rabi'a said, "Are you not ashamed before Him to ask Him to be satisfied with you, when you are not satisfied with Him?" By this she meant that first we must be truly satisfied with Allah, Most High, before we can ask Him to be satisfied with us. Then this was followed by the question to her, "When then is the servant satisfied with Allah Most High?" She replied, "When his pleasure in misfortune is equal to his pleasure in prosperity."

She said:

***"O God, whatsoever You have apportioned to me of worldly things,
Give that to Your enemies,
And what You have apportioned to me in the Hereafter,
Give that to Your Friends,
For You suffice me."***

She also said:

***"O God, if I worship You for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell,
And if I worship You in hope of Paradise,
Exclude me from Paradise.
But if I worship You for Your Own sake,
Grudge me not Your Everlasting Beauty."***

When Rabi'a was urged to speak, her words perfectly manifested her love, her belief and her faith, for she was so totally immersed in her Lord that she became a shining Light which attracted many people to her presence to drink from the same Spring from which she drank. She said, "If I will a thing and my

"You must conceal your good deeds as you conceal your evil deeds." In the same way, she said, "What appears of any (good) works, I count as nothing at all."

Lord does not will it, I shall be guilty of unbelief." So that her faith came from her total surrender to her Beloved God, as she said, "I have fled from the world and all that is in it. My prayer is for Union with You; that is the goal of my desire."

The sole object of Rabi'a's life was in her yearning and passionate love for her Beloved, which meant not merely the destruction of her self (nafs) but surrender to Allah every moment in the perfect Union in which there is no Lord and slave, no Creator and created being, only He in Himself. In that state she came to realize that she existed in Him without any possibility of separation from His indivisible Oneness.

Her attraction to a life of poverty was also part of her need not to be distracted from her inner journey by the necessity for material considerations. There is a story about this poverty of hers, as one of her companions said, "I went to visit Rabi'a and saw her in her house with nothing but a broken water pitcher out of which she drank and made her ablution. There was also an old reed mat and a brick which she sometimes used as a pillow. When I saw this, I felt very sad and I said to her, 'I have rich friends. If you wish I will get something from them for you.' She said, 'You have committed a grievous error. Is not my Provider and theirs one and the same?' I replied, 'Yes.' Then she said, 'And has the Provider of the poor forgotten the poor on account of their poverty? And does He remember the rich because of their riches?' I replied, 'No.' She said, 'Then since He knows of my state, how should I remind Him? Such is His Will and I too wish what He wills.'"

Rabi'a's love, which was passionate and all-consuming was also full of humility, fear and reverence (taqwa) for her Beloved, and when she was asked about how she had such a degree of intimacy, she said, "By constantly saying: I take refuge in You from everything which has distracted me from You and from every hindrance which has hindered me from You." She also said, "You must conceal your good deeds as you conceal your evil deeds."

In the same way, she said, "What appears of any (good) works, I count as nothing at all."

The key to Rabi'a's reaching and living in the loving Presence of her Lord was her constant praying, remembrance and asking for forgiveness for all her shortcomings, and a knowing that her Union with her Beloved God could not come in the way that she desired, but only in the way that He desired for her. She was also well aware that her remembrance and repentance did not come from herself, but from Him, her Beloved God. It is said that someone once said to her, "I have committed many sins; if I turn in repentance toward Allah, will He turn in His Mercy toward me?" She said, "No, but if He will turn toward you, you will turn toward Him." For Rabi'a, repentance was a Gift from Allah. As she said, "Seeking forgiveness with the tongue is the sin of lying. If I seek repentance of myself, I shall have need of repentance again." Or as she also said, "Our asking for forgiveness of Allah itself needs forgiveness."

She was blessed with a long life during which she continued, to her last days, to give of everything that Allah inspired her to give to all who loved her, because she was His special Light for them all. She is often referred to as the first true Saint (waliya) of Islam and was praised, not because she in any way represented womankind, but because as Attar (another famous Sufi) said, "When a woman walks in the Way of Allah like a man she cannot be called a woman." Attar also said that Rabi'a was "That one set apart in the seclusion of holiness; that woman veiled with the veil of sincerity; that one enflamed by love and longing, lost in union with God; that one accepted as a second spotless Mary." Although, as she said herself, she was always busy with her Beloved God all the time and she did not have any moment for anybody or anything else but Him, she also knew the meaning of what she said, for her Beloved Allah revealed Himself to her in every face around her. She said, "The groaning and yearning of the lover of Allah will not be satisfied until it is satisfied in the Beloved." And Rabi'a was, for many people, that Beloved.

A h a d i t h :

1. Utbah ibn Harith^{RA} relates: I joined the afternoon Prayer led by the Holy Prophet^{SAW} in Medina. The moment he concluded the service he stood up quickly and proceeded to one of his chambers stepping across the shoulders of the worshippers. People were perplexed by such haste. When he came back he perceived that people were wondering what had called him away so urgently. So he said: I recalled that there was left with me a piece of silver (or gold) and this disturbed me. I have now arranged for its distribution (*Bukhari*). Another version is: There was left with me a piece of silver (or gold) which was meant for charity. I was disturbed that it should remain with me overnight.

2. On the authority of Abu Hurayrah^{RA} from the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, who said:

Allah has supernumerary angels who rove about seeking out gatherings in which Allah's name is being invoked: they sit with them and fold their wings round each other, filling that which is between them and between the lowest heaven. When [the people in the gathering] depart, [the angels] ascend and rise up to heaven. He (the Prophet) said: Then Allah asks them - though He is Most Knowing about them: From where have you come? And they say: We have come from some servants of Yours on Earth: they were glorifying You, exalting You, witnessing that there is no god but You, praising You, and asking favors of You. He says: And what do they ask of Me? They say: They ask of You Your Paradise. He says: And have they seen My Paradise? They say: No, O Lord. He says: And how would it be were they to have seen My Paradise! They say: And they ask protection of You. He says: From what do they ask protection of Me? They say: From Your Hell-fire, O Lord. He says: And have they seen My Hell-fire? They say: No. He says: And how would it be were they to have seen My Hell-fire: They say: And they ask for Your forgiveness. He (the Prophet) said: Then He says: I have forgiven them and I have bestowed upon them what they have asked for, and I have granted them sanctuary from that from which they asked protection. He (the Prophet) said: They say: O Lord, among them is so-and-so, a much sinning servant, who was merely passing by and sat down with them. He (the Prophet) said: And He says: And to him too I have given forgiveness: he who sits with such people shall not suffer.

It was related by Muslim (also by al-Bukhari, at-Tirmidhi, and an-Nasa'i).

Black History: The Origin of the Human Race

By Alhaj Dhul-Waqar Yaqub

It would be safe to say, questions of origin and ancestry are asked by every thoughtful human being at least once in their lives. For Black Americans in particular, finding answers to these questions embarks upon an incredible journey of self discovery.

Black American folk wisdom says, "If you don't know where you've been, you won't know where you're going." Our captain and navigator into "where you've been" is Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop (December 29, 1923 – February 7, 1986), a historian, anthropologist and physicist. Considered one of the greatest African historians of the 20th century, Diop's scientific ideas have transformed the basic thrust of African studies in the United States.

Cheikh Anta Diop was born in the town of Diourbel, Senegal, on the West coast of Africa. His birthplace has a long tradition of producing Muslim scholars and oral historians. His early education was in a traditional Islamic school where his inspiration and interest in



How did I get here... Where did I come from... Who are my ancestors?

history, the humanities and social sciences from an African point of view began. At the age of 23, he went to Paris in 1946 to become a physicist. He remained there for 15 years, studying physics under Frederic Joliot-Curie, Marie Curie's son-in-law, and ultimately translating parts of Einstein's Theory of Relativity into his native Wolof. Diop's education also included African history, Egyptology, linguistics, anthropology, economics and sociology.

In 1951, Diop submitted a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Paris in which he argued that ancient Egypt had in fact been a Black African culture. The thesis was rejected. Over the next nine years, Diop reworked the thesis, adding stronger evidentiary support. In 1960, he succeeded in the defense of his thesis and was awarded his Ph.D. degree.

In 1955, the thesis had been published in

the popular press as a book titled Nations nègres et culture (Negro Nations and Culture). Dr. Diop challenged the notions of European centered scholars, who had written Africa's contributions to world civilization out of history. It would make him one of the most controversial historians of his time.

Dr. Diop's critics contend that his thesis lacked merit and that it essentially supplants and counters one form of racism with another, rather than attempting to arrive at the truth.

Seekers after truth who engage themselves in studies should be aware that there are scholars performing inferior research and research that supports prejudicial conclusions rather than ones of discovery. Other pseudo-scholars approach scholarship with designs to a political end. Concerning the latter, identity politics came to the forefront in the Black

American awareness experience. Identity politics is political action to advance the interests of members of a group who perceive themselves to be oppressed by virtue of a shared and marginalized identity (such as race, ethnicity or religion).

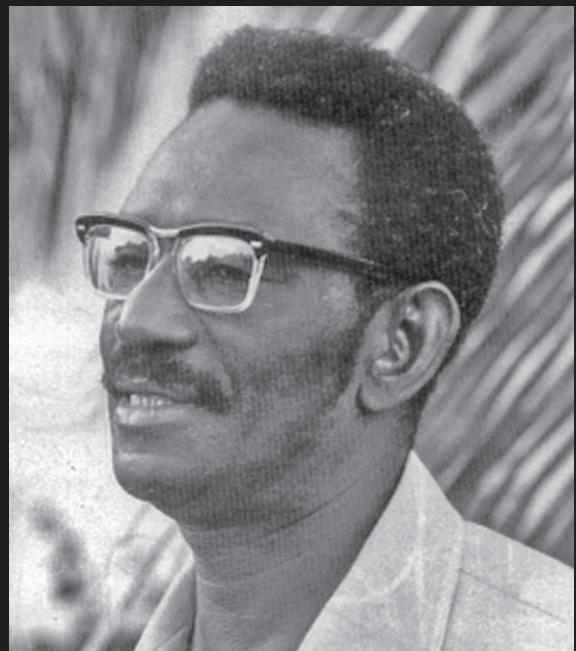
While using Africa as the vantage point and the basis for his thesis, Dr. Diop does not neglect the broader dimensions of history. He shows that history cannot be restricted by the limits of an ethnic group, nation or culture. Roman history is Greek as well as Roman, and both the Greek and the Roman histories are Egyptian because the entire Mediterranean was civilized Egypt; and Egypt in turn borrowed from other parts of Africa, especially Ethiopia.

Diop left his mark in the realm of the reassessment of the role of black people in world history and culture. Combining an unusual breadth of knowledge; including linguistics, history, anthropology, chemistry, and physics; he uncovered fresh evidence about the ancient origins and common principles of classical African civilization. He believed that people who feel they possess no past of their own tend to be absorbed and assimilated into the governing system, and are made to feel inferior because of this apparent deficiency.

Dr. Diop contends that there exist two theories of human origin: *monogenetic* and *polygenetic*. The monogenetic view states that there is one source for mankind; man was born in one place and became different due to the climatic conditions to which he was exposed. Followers of this theory believe that mankind was born in Africa - specifically in the area of Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. It is from this area of Africa that mankind evolved as a separate species and left there to people other parts of the world, which had different climatic conditions. Under these different climatic conditions and over periods of time the Africans changed and developed a new look.

As an example, during the last Glacial Epoch about 40,000 year ago, a Homo Sapiens currently identified as *Grimaldi Man*, left Africa and went to Europe. As a result of the extreme cold climatic conditions and over a period of 20,000 years he underwent an adaptation to that climate and evolved into what we conventionally call a white man. The Grimaldi Negroids have left their numerous traces all over Europe and Asia, from the Iberian Peninsula to Lake Baykal in Siberia, passing through France, Austria, the Crimea, and the Basin of Don, etc. In these last two regions, the late Soviet Professor Mikhail

While using Africa as the vantage point and the basis for his thesis, Dr. Diop does not neglect the broader dimensions of history. He shows that history cannot be restricted by the limits of an ethnic group, nation or culture.



Cheikh Anta Diop, a modern champion of African identity, was born in Diourbel, Senegal on December 29, 1923. At the age of twenty-three, he journeyed to Paris, France to continue advanced studies in physics. Within a very short time, however, he was drawn deeper and deeper into studies relating to the African origins of humanity and civilization. He left this world in 1986.

Gerasimov, a scholar of rare objectivity, identified the Negroid type from skulls found in the Middle Mousterian period.

The polygenetic opinion claims that man has several locations of origin, which would explain the physiological differences between the races. Followers of this theory believe that man was born in Africa, Europe and Asia and there was no evolutionary or climatic development. Diop argues that there are two reasons why this theory is faulty. He says that nature never strikes twice in its evolution; she doesn't create the same being twice. In addition, complete fossils have been found only on the African continent, which proves that life began there. No such fossils have been found anywhere else in the world.

Aspects of the polygenetic theory (sometimes referred to as multi-regionalism) have been criticized as not based on objective scientific observation. Some critics even argue that the polygenetic theory may be motivated by ethnocentrism and is meant to instill beliefs of purity of lineage. This implied racism has had a negative effect, causing scientists to restrict their hypothesizing to politically correct conclusions.

Dr. Diop reinforces his belief in the monogenetic theory by noting that the polygenetic theory seeks to establish a hierarchy of race suggesting that some races are superior to others. He asserts that if man has the same origins, there can be no intellectual hierarchy because all of the races of the world would have the same intellectual history. If the races had had different origins it can be said that they had different intellectual capacity because they all had a different intellectual history. The polygenetic theory is essential in order to defend the notion that there are inequalities between the races. It is for this reason why the polygenetic theory has been defended by people. However, science has set this theory aside.

The monogenetic theory supports the notion that because our origin is the same we also share the same intellectual capacity. Dr. Diop is not saying that Blacks are intellectually superior to Whites. That would be false. Diop insists no race is superior to another. All races have the same intellectual capacity. There is no autonomic difference in the brain of the various races.

Currently, the dominant view among sci-

entists is the *Out of Africa Model*. According to the Out of Africa Model (sometimes referred to as the *Recent African Origin of Modern Humans* or RAO), Homo Sapiens evolved in Africa 200,000 years ago. Homo Sapiens began migrating from Africa between 70,000 – 50,000 years ago and would eventually replace existing Homo Erectus, Neanderthal, and Homo Sapiens in Europe and Asia.

The Out of Africa Model has gained support by recent research using mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). After analyzing genealogy trees constructed using 133 types of mtDNA, they concluded that all were descended from a woman from Africa, dubbed Mitochondrial Eve.

By analyzing DNA from people in all regions of the world, American geneticist Dr. Spencer Wells has concluded that all humans alive today are descended from a San bushman who lived in Africa around 60,000 years ago.

Here, important questions arise: Should Black Americans be satisfied with learning only European history and why should there be a focus on Black history? Dr. Diop answered these questions by stating, “It’s fine to learn the history of others but you must know your own history first. People who lose their historical memory become a fragile people and they regress. It is their historical memory that permits them to be a strong people.”

The final question is: To what extent do the works of Cheikh Anta Diop allow one to respond to the challenges of the future? Theophile Obenga, a disciple and a companion of Diop answers this question by stating, “With Cheikh Anta Diop, history is not defined as the study of the past of humankind, but as the construction of the future in the name of life.”

Dr. Diop was the Director of Radiocarbon Laboratory at the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN) at the University of Dakar. He sat on numerous international scientific committees and achieved recognition as one of the leading historians, Egyptologists, linguists and anthropologists in the world. He traveled widely, lectured incessantly and was cited and quoted voluminously. He was regarded by many as the modern ‘pharaoh’ of African studies. Cheikh Anta Diop died quietly in sleep in Dakar, Senegal on February 7, 1986.

In the introductory remarks of Cheikh Anta Diop we noted that his early education was in a “traditional Islamic school.” His life’s works appear to be a reflection of the Holy Qur’an.

Based on the idea that “the proof of the pudding is the pudding itself,” it would be safe to believe that he was grounded in the Qur’anic concepts of man’s creation. Some of the verses that support Diop’s ideas of the origin of the human race and the development of man are in Arabic at the beginning of this paper and may be rendered into English as follows:

[God] Who made perfectly well all that He created. And He originated the creation of man from clay. Then He made his progeny from an extract of an insignificant fluid. (32: 8-9)

O you human beings! What is the matter with you that you fail to understand that Allah does not do anything unless there is wisdom and purpose underlying it? You yourselves are not ready to accept the assumption that you do things with no aim or purpose in view. Why do you therefore assume that Allah, the Most Wise and All-Knowing, does things without purpose? Why do you jump to the thoughtless conclusion that He created man with no purpose in view? Why do you fail to grasp the evident truth that your creation has not been the result of a sudden meaningless impulse? It was the result of wise planning and deliberate execution in a succession of stages from one point to another. (71: 14-15)

Allah has made the earth a vast expanse for you. That you may traverse its spacious paths for the development of civilization and also to attain spiritual perfection. (71: 20-21)

One world, one people. That seems to be what Allah is saying in the Holy Qur’an:

“O mankind, We have created

you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another.” (49:14)

As a counter-measure against ethnocentrism (intolerance of other cultures), racism (intolerance of other races) and xenophobia (fear of other races) we must internalize the historical reality that the blood that unites us is thicker than the waters of the Diaspora, culture and accents that separate and divide us.

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Al-Khwarizmi & Ibn Rushd Muslim Scholars of the Middle Age

Dr. Manzurul A. Sikder

Over the past 15 centuries Muslim scholars have added greatly to collective human knowledge. Many of their contributions are not fully acknowledged or simply forgotten by those who record history. Unfortunately, this group includes some modern Muslim writers as well. In this article I will summarize the works of two scholars of the middle age, namely Al Khwarizmi and Ibn Rushd, focusing on their contributions to mathematics and medicine, respectively.

Al-Khwarizmi

Besides being a pioneer mathematician, Al-Khwarizmi (full name Muhammad ibn Musa al Khwarizmi al Majousi al Katarbali which is essentially a capsule biography) was also a renowned geographer and astronomer. He was born circa 780 CE in what most historians believe to be Khwarizm, modern day Uzbekistan, and was Persian by descent.¹ After Muslim conquest of the Persian Empire in the mid seventh century, as Baghdad became the seat of science and commerce, Al-Khwarizmi moved to the new Abbasid capital, and began studying mathematics and science. He soon established himself as the chief scholar in Khalifah al Mamun's "House of Wisdom" (*Baitul Hikma*), an unrivalled

center for the study of humanities and the sciences of that era.²

Al-Khwarizmi is best known for his contributions in the field of mathematics. Most experts call him the father of modern algebra.³ It was his simple yet rational approach to solving linear and quadratic equations that made this particular branch of mathematics useful. The word algebra itself is derived from an Arabic term, *al-jabr*, which was one of the two principal operations proposed by Al-Khwarizmi to solve quadratic equations in his ca. 830 CE book *Al-Kitab al-Mukhtasar fi Hisab al-Jabr wal-Muqabala* (literally, "The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing," later became known simply as *al-Jabr*). This presented a

radical change in solution of mathematical problems, which was until then dominated by complicated geometrical proofs developed by the ancient Greeks, and arithmetic practiced by the Babylonians.⁴ Al-Khwarizmi's algebra in fact incorporated both of these earlier methods but significantly broadened the horizon.

Furthermore, Al-Khwarizmi was mainly responsible for the transmission of decimal-based numerical system of India to the rest of the world. His *On the Calculation with Hindu Numerals*, written in 825 CE, introduced what we now call the "Arabic numerals." The book was later translated in Latin as *Algoritmi de numero Indorum*. In Europe, the author became known as Algoritmi, giving rise to the modern day term algorithm.⁵

During his lifetime, Al-Khwarizmi wrote over a dozen books on mathematics and astronomy. A distinct achievement was calculating the mean longitude of the sun and the moon based on the Jewish calendar. This he presented his book *Risala fi Istikhraj Tarikh al-Yahud* ("Extraction of the Jewish Era").⁴ He died around 850 CE.

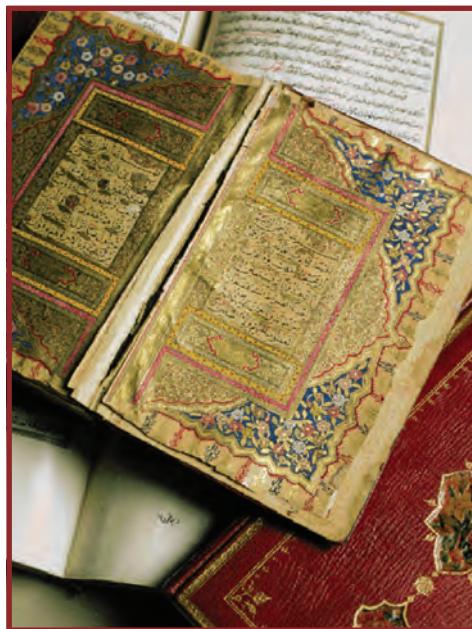
Ibn Rushd

Ibn Rushd was born in 520 AH (1126 CE) in the province of Cordoba, present day Spain, as Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd. A true renaissance man, his expertise embraced both the humanities and the sciences. In addition to being the chief justice of Seville and later Cordoba, and at times the personal physician and adviser to the Almohad kings, throughout his professional life he was a prolific writer and authored more than 20,000 pages of text on subjects as varied as philosophy, logic, psychology, music, the Shariah, general theology, medicine, astronomy, geography, physics, and mathematics.⁶

Although the best known work of Ibn Rushd is his commentaries on the writings of Greek philosopher Aristotle (for which he was known by the west for several centuries simply as *The Commentator*),⁷ he authored 67 original books, including 20 on medicine alone. The best known among them is an encyclopedia of medicine titled *Kitabul Kulliyat fil Tibb* (literally, "General Rules of Medicine"), translated in Latin as *Colliget*. It took him nearly 9 years (1153 and 1162 CE) to complete the 7-volume treatise.⁸ This became quite popular among the western Caliphate who were antagonist to the medical thoughts and philosophies of Ibn Sina, a favorite of the Baghdad Caliphate.

Ibn Rushd himself was deferential to Ibn

Sina, and paid great tribute to the old master by writing a commentary on Ibn Sina's *Urjuza fil Tibb* ("Poem on Medicine").⁸ Interestingly, Ibn Rushd's response - *Sharh Urjuzat Ibn Sina* - was also written in verses.



The *Kulliyat* leans heavily on the teachings of Greek physicians, including Galen and Hippocrates. In addition, an "abstract" on Galen's works, appropriately titled *Talkhis* (literally, intermediate-depth commentary), was published under separate cover. Some of the original Arabic manuscripts of *Talkhis*, unlike many of Ibn Rushd's writings, are still preserved. However, the scope of *Kulliyat* was more expansive than previous books of medicine. The anatomy described was more detailed: seven sets of cranial nerves, for example, along with several spinal nerves and their innervation were fully illustrated, as was the task of the brain as more than a motor functioning center. Many attribute him to be the first to describe neurological symptoms due to loss of substantia nigra, a phenomenon now known as Parkinson's disease.⁸ His understanding of the retina was extraordinary: he was the first to propose the existence of and describe the properties of photoreceptors in the retina, and to claim that it is the principal organ of sight. Preventative health also gets its fair share in *Kulliyat*, as Ibn Rushd devotes an entire volume on the biology of diseases and their prevention.

A pervasive theme in all his writing was compatibility of faith and nature when both are understood properly. He once wrote, "Anyone who studies anatomy will increase

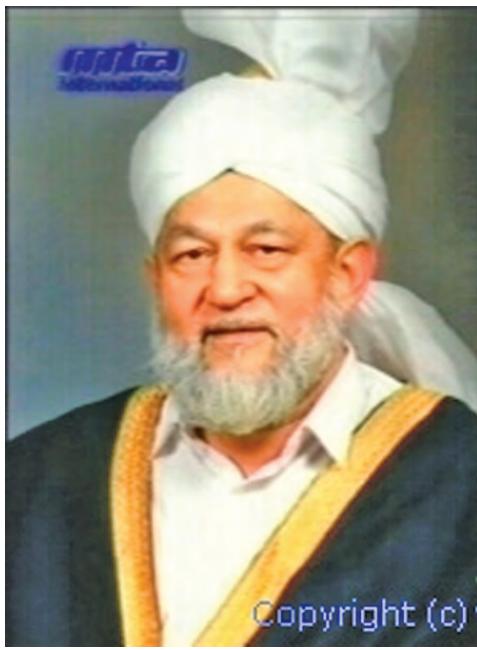
his faith in the omnipotence and oneness of God the Almighty."⁹ Among his contemporary, he was known as *Faqih musharik fil ulum*, a jurist who participates in the sciences.

He maintained that true happiness can only be achieved through a balanced psychological health, and people cannot enjoy psychological health unless they follow ways that lead to happiness in the hereafter and unless they believe in God and His oneness.¹⁰ It is difficult to tease out theological philosophy from his medical writings. Noting this, the German physician Max Meyerhof commented, "In [medieval] Spain, the philosophical bias predominated among medical men. The prototypes of this combination are the two Muslims, Ibn Zuhra (Avenzoar) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes)."¹¹

Some scholars, however, believe that Ibn Rushd's unsuccessful attempts to defend philosophers against theologians paved the way for decline in Muslim medicine.⁸ His influence began to wane as the political atmosphere changed. His strict rationalism collided with the new Almohad ruler, and the latter ordered publicly burning of many of his books and banished him to Marrakesh, Morocco. The great philosopher-physician died there on December 10, 1198.

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Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{RH}

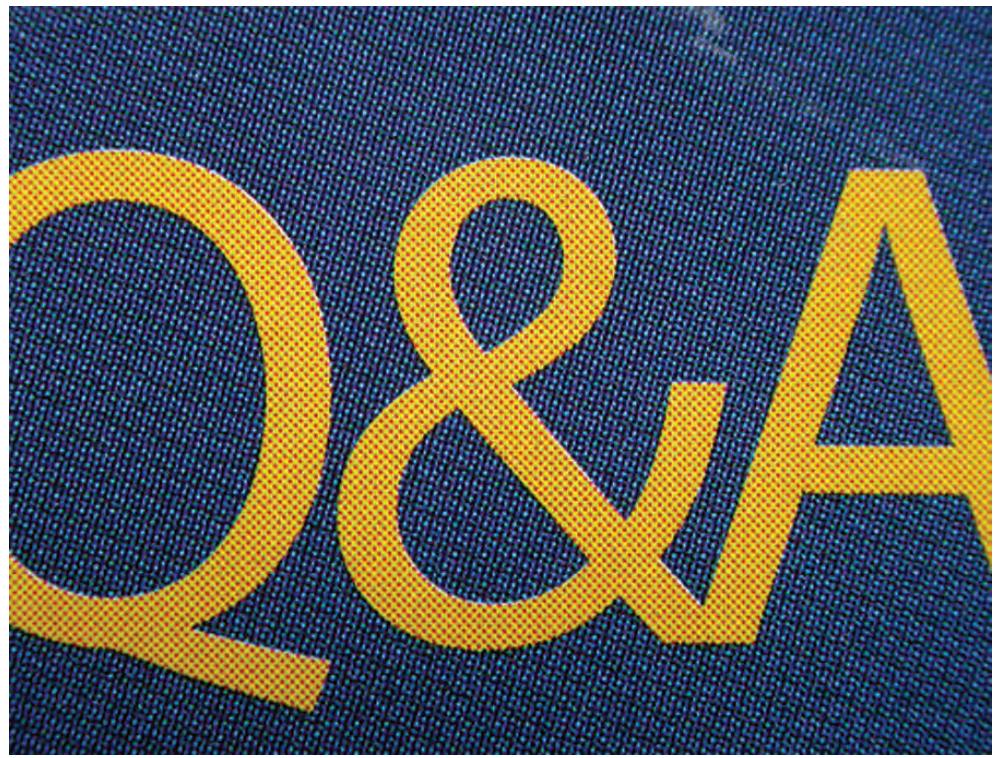
From the Review of Religions,
February 1994

The fourth leader of the International Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, makes himself available to publicly address any questions put to him. We present below a transcript of two questions from a session recorded at Nasir Baagh, the Ahmadiyya Muslim centre in Germany on the 11th of September 1993.

Transcribed by Amatul Hadi Ahmad

Question - It is very important in Islam not to hoard money but to keep it working. How does Islam view placing money on the capitalist stock market system?

Answer - The Islamic economic system runs on a different principle and you have to understand that system before you can get an answer to the question which you have specifically asked. There are two possible ways of drawing capital into the working machinery of the economy - to circulate capital so that it can turn the wheels of the



Investment, Interest, and Islam

economy and keep it going.

One way to do this is to reward capital with profits so that you can draw capital and utilize it as you please. That means there are two tools created in society - one is the smaller pull of capital magnates and the other much larger and diffused pull of the society as a whole. To draw money from the profits of a society and direct it to economic channels requires the banking magnates and these banking magnates work on people's greed for profit on their capital. The fundamental principle that can be understood to apply in this capitalist system, is that money gives *birth to children*, that is, it creates money directly. In itself it is believed to have that quality.

Islam refuses to accept this notion. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} of Islam once asked the question of someone who had enquired about interest: "Does your money give birth to children?" In other words, if you keep it idle will it reproduce by itself? Of course, the answer was *No*. From this we see that Islam considers money to be an inert factor in an economy. A factor indeed, but an inert factor which can play both positive and negative roles depending on who is utilizing that money. So human values must be wedded to money before it produces any

results. If those human values are negative values and if irresponsible people get hold of money, that money would be wasted and the whole capital would be sunk into nothingness. In other cases, if the users or usurpers of that money are clever enough to put it towards some advantage in the economy, then they will gain from it, but the gain of the person who channels this money into the banks, etc. will be a limited gain and a fixed gain. It will be unrelated to the results. If someone who gets your money on the condition of interest, loses it all, then either he has to pay through his nose for the rest of his life or he would have to declare himself bankrupt. Thus this system also invites all kinds of cheats and that is what you come across in everyday life in Europe. In England, particularly these days, many fraudsters who use this system to their advantage eat up the money as best they can and then declare themselves bankrupt. With them sink the economies of millions of people.

Islam does not believe in the principle of money reproducing by itself. So, Islam promotes shareholding - a contract where the lender of money will share in the outcome. If it results in a loss, he would suffer the loss and if it turns a profit, he will share

in the profit. Now, that requires very cautious decisions on the part of the lender and a higher standard of honesty and integrity in the economy - otherwise the system cannot work. So this is a resultant benefit for the society - only those stay afloat in the market who are honest and have earned the reputation of integrity. The rest are just wiped out. This is the Islamic attitude.

But still, the second part of the question is to be answered: "How would Islam force capital to be pushed into economic channels?"

Islam uses the approach of exacting a progressive fine on idle capital. Thus, according to Islam, capital is created to run the wheels of the economy and nobody has the right to hoard capital. In this aspect, capital is the common property of the nation. It can be individual property only as long as it is serves some purpose. When it becomes idle, then it is to be fined. The Islamic system of *Zakat* is exactly that fine imposed on idle capital. In Islam, if the capital owned by individuals is not employed in some economic projects, it decreases in value for that individual, that is, the cost of hoarding is paid to the nation by those who hoard money. So they are compelled to push it into the economy and there, as already explained, it requires better people, more honest people, more capable and competent people to utilize that capital.

Now, if you go back into the history of Islam, you will begin to understand that the most honest and the most pious people were the greatest "capitalists," if you want to call them that, who put capital to good use for the economy. Hadhrat Imam Abu Hanifa^{RH}, one of the most highly revered jurists in Islam, whose system of jurisprudence is followed by the largest number of Muslims today, was also an astute businessman. People used to throw money at him. Some would leave pouches full of money at his doorstep with the message, "For God's sake employ it and let us share the profit." So, if he could employ that money he would share equally in the profit. Mostly, people benefited from his intellect and his experience and this also happened in many other cases. Integrity was supported by the economic system of Islam while on the other hand, dishonesty and the capacity to cheat come to the fore and are supported by the system of usury.

However, I think the question requires a little more exploration in one particular



Islam does not believe in the principle of money reproducing by itself. So, Islam promotes shareholding - a contract where the lender of money will share in the outcome. If it results in a loss, he would suffer the loss and if it turns a profit, he will share in the profit.

area. The comparative advantage or disadvantage of the two systems comes into the limelight during economic crises such as we have seen recently in England. Those complaints that run on money borrowed against interest, during the idle days of the economy, must collapse. There is no chance of survival for them because they must pay through the nose, although they are not earning anything and not benefiting from the money they had borrowed. In Islam, it is the other way around. If the money becomes idle in the hands of the one who had borrowed it, and production has to be lowered, due to a crisis, then the lender will also have to share the burden with the borrower. The lender will not be paid anything. Such companies will be given much greater breathing periods like those animals who

hibernate during winter periods. So, the Islamic system provides the possibility of hibernation, while the western capitalist system has no provision for this.

The following question was also asked on the same occasion and is a continuation of the previous answer as it relates to the Western economic system.

Question - Why does Islam forbid the use of interest?

Answer - This is a short question which requires a very long answer and I doubt if we have sufficient time in this forum as I cannot devote the entire time to one single question. Although I cannot be exhaustive, I will attempt to give a satisfactory, but brief answer.

The question relates not only to an individual's requirements - the question of interest and its forbiddance in Islam is a much wider issue of a much greater impact in kind as well. All those financial systems that are run on usury and interest are called capitalist systems. They all have an inherent weaknesses - not only one, but many inherent weaknesses which always ultimately make the people living in those areas suffer from the consequences whether they themselves directly participate in the system or not. I can't speak at length on this issue but I can give you a single example to illustrate my point.

A society that can borrow money on interest is given permission to spend its future in the present time. What happens is that if I for example, need some money to spend on a luxurious car, a good hotel, a house or some other article of luxury and the rate of my earnings is too low but my impatience is without limit and I can't wait until I have earned enough to fulfill my desire, the system based on usury, or the interest system provides an opportunity to borrow money from the banks. Apparently, what I am doing is that I am borrowing from my own future, so I become poorer with the passage of time and sometimes it becomes almost impossible for me to service the debts which I have got myself burdened with. Now this is not just an individual problem. From then on, it becomes a national problem and continues to become more complex.

Industry which flourishes on this system is in fact, catering for the requirements of the day or the year and expands itself on

a requirement that it is not natural but artificially boosted. After a while, buying power becomes reduced more and more until it reaches a point of stalemate. The buying power of the country as a whole becomes very little and the servicing of debt itself becomes a huge problem for the country to overcome. Industry suffers heavily and so does trade. The result is that at such times, economic crises appear.

Now, those countries that have enough venues of foreign trade to support themselves in time of crisis can see themselves through a while. But when a larger number of advanced countries reach a crisis at the same time, then it is impossible to support such a false economy. The financial crisis that recently occurred in England was in fact predicted by me in my lecture some years ago at the Queen Elizabeth II Hall when I clearly stated that their system of interest was going to land them in much deeper trouble than they believed. That is exactly what happened and the problem will expand further.

Because of the political changes in Eastern Europe, the crisis in Western Europe has been delayed for a while for certain reasons that I do not wish to enlarge upon here. But it will come. Foreign markets will remain limited. Their buying powers are also reducing. Blood is being

sucked out of Africa so rapidly now that they are suffering from anaemia - and pernicious anaemia for that matter.

If the race in Europe for acquiring more foreign markets is realized, say, in five years or so, then you will realize how intense the problem will be and how threatening it will become. Germany itself is passing through a phase of rebuilding its economy and absorbing the large number of Germans from the East. Among them is available excellent know-how and expertise which has been paid very little in the past. They are now a part of the West Germany economy and stand on an equal footing and so the level of production, after an initial shock, will rise so rapidly that the rest of Europe will find itself shuddering at the prospect of the boosted German economy. Then the race for foreign markets will really begin in earnest.

Also, Russia will not remain the Russia of today which is still suffering from the aftermath of the destruction of the communist system. Russia is regrouping itself. Its economy will start breathing again. The state of Russia today reminds us of the great work of Milton, *Paradise Regained*, in which the armies of Satan regroup themselves after the initial shock to re-capture paradise again. So, don't

consider Russia out of the competition.

The USSR is a huge country, or a number of countries grouped together, whose economy is potentially stronger than that of many European countries. Once they have had the breathing time to regroup themselves and to change their system to a capitalist one then a course of events similar to that of Germany would follow. So now, imagine the situation of Europe with lessening buying power, increasing economic problems and increasing competition. Such crisis always leads to war and this is a fundamental principle that can never be negated.

That is why in prohibiting usury or interest the Holy Qur'an says that if you do not desist from usury, then be ready to go to war with Allah and His Prophet, which means that the divine system would be at odds with you and you are bound to enter a situation of war. So this is the shortest possible answer that I could give but there is far more to be said.

The Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community responds to the specific questions being asked. Should our readers require any further clarification, they should feel free to contact The Muslim Sunrise Editor.♦

A h a d i t h

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah^{RA}, who said that the Messenger of Allah^{SAW} said: Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection:

O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant so-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant so-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that (the reward for doing so) with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you gave Me not to drink. He will say: O Lord, how should I give You to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: My servant so-and-so asked you to give him to drink and you gave him not to drink. Had you given him to drink you would have surely found that with Me.

It was related by Muslim.



Ibn Battuta: The Greatest Traveler of All Times

By Atif Munawar Mir

“For him who adopts a path seeking knowledge, Allah eases the way to paradise...A learned one is superior to a worshipper as the moon is superior to all the planets. The divines are heirs of the prophets and prophets do not leave an inheritance of dirhams and dinars but only of knowledge. He who acquires knowledge acquires a vast portion.”

Inspired by these teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, Muslims, throughout history, have travelled to distant places to meet eminent scholars, explore unknown territories and discover new cultures. Ibn Battuta, by far, is the most celebrated of these travellers in the Islamic world. His travels spanned over a time period of thirty years and covered 75,000 miles. This distance is approximately three times greater than Marco Polo's journey from Venice to China in the late thirteenth century. In the West, Ibn Battuta is not known well, mainly because he was a Muslim and travelled only within the borders of the Islamic world. Driven by the desire to seek knowledge, he met sufis, legal scholars, mystics and magicians living in 44 modern countries including Morocco, Egypt, Syria, India, Somalia, Tanzania, China, Turkey, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia. The stories of his travels provide not only knowledge of Islamic history but also offer a sense of aesthetic pleasure.

Who was Ibn Battuta? Apart from his own personal travel records, we have few details about his life. He was born in Tangier on February 24th, 1304, and died in 1369. He left Tangier on June 14, 1325 A.D., at twenty-two years of age, and finally ended his journey in Morocco and dictated accounts of his journeys to a scholar, named Ibn Juzayy. The accounts of his journey are known as *Rihla* (Travels) of Ibn Battuta.¹ In the 14th century Islamic world, the tradition of writing ‘Rihla’ was a common pursuit. Rihla were detailed travel journals or memoirs, written by Muslim travelers and scholars about their visits to

Mecca or other places. Ibn Battuta covered his 75,000 mile travel route on foot, donkey and camel. He travelled through scorching deserts, over towering mountains and raging oceans. He travelled under the constant fear of bandits and blood thirsty pirates. In other words, he risked his life for the sake of seeking knowledge and wisdom. His travels were not merely an adventure, but also and primarily a search for knowledge and a desire to experience and witness God's vast and infinite creation. He truly lived up to the saying of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}:

“Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China, for seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim.”

Ibn Battuta's Journey

Ibn Battuta's journey began when the Mongols were converting to Islam. During this time of peace, Ibn Battuta set off globe trotting. He was a man of meager means but he was fed, entertained and cared for along the way by royalty, merchants and Mongol kings.² In his books, he describes meetings with kings and encounters with sufis. However, modern geographers find the “descriptions of varying natural environment, products of far-off islands, articles of export, metropolises, ports and sea routes...”³ most interesting in his travel accounts.

1325-1327 – Beginning of Journey – From Morocco to Mecca⁴

Ibn Battuta's first journey was to the holy city of Mecca for the Hajj. On his way to Mecca, he passed through modern day Algiers (Algeria), Tunis (Tunisia), Tripoli (Libya), Alex-

andria (Egypt), Jerusalem (Israel), Damascus (Syria) and Medina (Saudi Arabia).

In his book, he provides numerous personal observations of North Africa and the Middle East. For example, this is his account of the social security system in Damascus in the early 14th century C.E:

“The variety and expenditure of the religious endowments at Damascus are beyond computation. There are endowments...for supplying wedding outfits to girls whose families are unable to provide them, and others for the freeing of prisoners. There are endowments for travelers, out of the revenues of which they are given food, clothing, and the expenses of conveyance to their countries. Then there are endowments for the improvement and paving of the streets, because all the lanes in Damascus have pavements on either side, on which the foot passengers walk, while those who ride use the roadway in the centre”.⁵

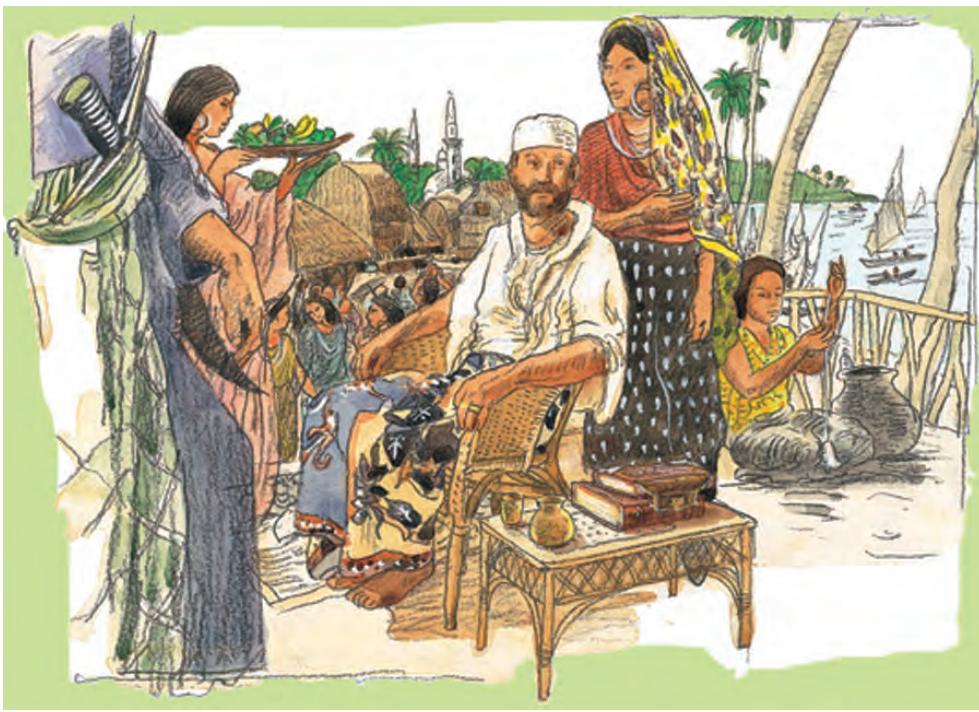
He painted the picture of the Nile, Alexandria and Cairo in the following words:

“There is no need for a traveler on the Nile to take any provision with him, because whenever he wishes to descend on the bank he may do so, for ablutions, prayers, purchasing provisions or any other purpose. There is a continuous series of bazaars from city of Alexandria to Cairo”.⁶

1327-1330- To East Africa and back to Arabia⁷

After completing Hajj for the first time, Ibn Battuta decided to visit Iraq and Iran. It is at this point that his globetrotting career really began.⁸ However, he kept coming back to

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Mecca from different directions during his visits and in total performed Hajj seven times.

He stopped in Basra, Iraq, which in earlier centuries of Islamic history produced great Muslim philosophers, theologians, scientists, poets and historians.⁹ While in Iraq, Ibn Battuta also visited the city of Baghdad, which had recently faced the Mongolian invasion and, as a result, had lost its intellectual splendor. Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic empire ruled by the Abbasid Caliphate. The Abbasid Caliphate had come into power in 751 after defeating the Umayyads. Once a powerful military and intellectual force, the influence of the Abbasid Caliphate had decreased in the mid 13th century. The Mongols overran Baghdad in 1258. They destroyed the Grand Library of Baghdad, containing countless historical documents and books on subjects ranging from medicine to astronomy. According to some claims, Mongols slaughtered hundred of thousands of people.¹⁰ The impact of the Mongolian invasion was still visible in the 1320s, when Ibn Battuta visited Baghdad. He describes Iraq's sad state in the following words:

"Her outward lineaments have departed and nothing remains of her but the name...there is no beauty in her that arrests the eye, or summons the busy passer-by to forget his business and to gaze."¹¹

After visiting Iraq and Iran, he returned to Mecca, from where he sailed down the eastern coast of Africa through the Red and Arabian Seas, and further, to modern day Tanza-

nia and Somalia. From there he sailed back to Oman and took an overland caravan route to Arabia and then back to Mecca again. While in Mogadishu (Somalia), he received great hospitality from the local people. In 14th century Eastern Africa, the spread of Islamic culture was not synonymous with the peopling of the region by Persians.¹² The rulers, scholars, officials and big merchants, as well as the port workers, farmers, craftsmen, and slaves, were dark-skinned people speaking African tongues in everyday life.¹³ For Arabs and Persians, East Africa was a fertile, well-watered land of economic opportunity and a place of salvation from drought, famine, overpopulation and war at home.¹⁴

1330-1341-To India, through Anatolia and Asia.¹⁵

Ibn Battuta was now a skilled traveler, however the travels required money. He heard that the Sultan in Delhi, India, was seeking learned men to work as *qadi* (judges) to interpret Islamic law. So in 1330, Ibn Battuta set out for India. He traveled through Asia Minor (comprising most of the modern republic of Turkey) Central Asia and Afghanistan.¹⁶ While travelling through modern day Turkey, he speaks in his book of *prestige enjoyed by doctors of law among Turks*.¹⁷ In 1333, he crossed the towering Hindu Kush, which separates inner Asia from the Indus and finally reached India, where he met with the sultan of Delhi, Muhammad Tughluq. He was granted a position as a *qadi*, and served the king for

almost eight years. Ibn Battuta described the King Tughluq, who was also a learned scholar, in his *Rihla*, as:

"The king of India...makes a practice of honouring strangers and showing affection to them...the majority of his courtiers, palace officials, ministers of state, judges, and relatives by marriage are foreigners and he has issued a decree that foreigners are to be called by the title of Aziz (Honorable)"¹⁸

1341-1349-Moves from India to China and encounters many adventures¹⁹

In 1340, the sultan of Delhi appointed Ibn Battuta to lead a mission to China. He reached China passing through southern India, Ceylon, Maldives Island, Bengal, Burma and Sumatra.²⁰ Ibn Battuta notes China as *the safest and most agreeable country of the world for the traveler*²¹. However, he was not impressed by China's paganism:

China was beautiful, but it did not please me. On the contrary, I was greatly troubled thinking about the way paganism dominated this country. Whenever I went out of my lodging, I saw many blameworthy things. That disturbed me so much that I stayed indoors most of the time and only went out when necessary. During my stay in China, whenever I saw any Muslims I always felt as though I were meeting my own family and close kinsmen.²²

1349-1354-Journey back home; visit to Grenada and the final adventure to Mali²³

Ibn Battuta returned again to Mecca in 1346 to perform the Hajj one more time. When he had completed his duties in Mecca he began his journey home to Fez in Morocco. He arrived in Fez in 1349. However, the thirst for traveling had made his soul restless. In 1350 he was on the move again; this time to Grenada on the Iberian Peninsula. Still not completely satisfied that he had traveled all of *Dar-al-Islam* (i.e. lands of Islam) he joined a caravan to cross the Sahara to visit Mali. In 1355 he finally returned home for good²⁴ after spending 30 years of his life traveling.

Rihla as the Historical Document

Ibn Battuta's story teaches us about the Islamic world in the 14th century. Through his writings, we learn about the hospitality, customs, educational methods and the geographical conditions of the Muslim world.

James Preston, a renowned scholar of geographical education admitted more than 25 years ago that Ibn Battuta's book, written as it was in Arabic, *made little impact on Christian world. Even today, when some of our schools teach children about the intense heat of the torrid zone, reference could be made to Ibn Battuta, who six centuries ago, pointed out that the climate along the equator was less extreme than the climate in the so-called temperate zone in North Africa.*²⁵ It may be argued, however, that lately the contributions of Ibn Battuta to the subject of history and geography are being recognized. For example, Paula Ranciato of Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, an educational partnership between Yale University and New Haven Public schools, acknowledged the historical value of Ibn Battuta's travel narrative. Referring to Ibn Battuta's Rihla, she said: *The importance of the narrative in a social studies class is the ability of our students to examine and explore people's dreams and experiences in a social and cultural context.*²⁶

Joan Arno and Helen Grady, educators of younger children, admit that the study of the adventures of Ibn Battuta provide a mechanism for teaching about the early 14th century.²⁷

Ibn Battuta employed personal experiences to construct a social history of 14th century Islamic world. His informative narratives contained fascinating portraits of political and cultural elites. He discusses his meeting with sufis. He sought knowledge from legal scholars. His Rihla also provides in depth details of local cultures and sensibilities. However, some argue that personal experiences are not wholly reliable because of the informants' tendency to *exaggerate and idealize what they did*. No doubt, personal narratives may contain errors and biases, and does not necessarily constitute a complete historical record by itself. Nonetheless, personal narratives help us gain meaningful insights into understanding how people lived in the past.

Paul Kegan, in his book "Ibn Battuta, Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354" says the following about the use of Ibn Battuta's narrative of the Islamic world:



*Its monuments too abide, for those who may have the fortunate to visit them, but its men and manners are to most of us utterly unknown, or dimly conceived in the romantic image of the Arabian Nights. Even for the specialist it is difficult to reconstruct their lives and see them as they were. Histories and biographies there are in quantity, but the historians for all their picturesque details, seldom show the ability to select the essential and to give their figures that touch of the intimate which makes them live again for the reader. It is in this faculty that Ibn Battuta excels.*²⁸

Conclusion

The modern mind might question the value of Ibn Battuta's 30 years of travelling. In today's world, knowledge is generally acquired for monetary reasons, status or prestige, but in the Middle Ages, the purpose of acquiring knowledge was for the sake of knowledge itself. Ibn Battuta's travels should be an inspiration for young people to travel and explore the different cultures of the world and expand their horizons. The knowledge of cultures acquired through travel, tends

to be more authentic and reliable unlike the knowledge acquired through mass media, which reduces the complexity of cultures into sound bites. Granted that Ibn Battuta did not have to worry about customs and passports but don't forget that he travelled when modes of transportation were as inconvenient as donkeys, horses, camels and ships and the threats of storms, illnesses, pirates and bandits were a constant danger. His courage and commitment stand as an inspiration to all who thirst to explore the ocean of knowledge.♦

(Footnotes)

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- 6 Dunn, Ross, "The Mamluks", The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, University of California Press, 1986, p. 45.
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Poetry Corner

By Maria Andleeb Ahmed

In this brilliant sphere of such
Marvels, beauty and wonder
How can there exist a dark side
Filled with strife, rage and plunder?

Its mere presence causes many
To give up faith and hope.
With his upturned wondering eyes,
A young child ponders—"How can man cope?"

With so much hate and violence
It causes one's heart to ache.
Thought the child, "Is life worth more
Than the time it takes for it to break?"

"Should humans, as animals
Living knowing only one belief,
And not have a choice
To endure sorrow and grief?"

"Should they not be given the chance
To follow the wrong path and go astray,
To kill, hurt, and destroy others for reasons
Concerning their own greed, desires, and ways?"

"Would life not be much simpler
In such a style?"
But "NO" is the answer,
Realized the child with a smile.

Regardless of the horrors of this world
And the disappointments it may carry,
Life is a most precious gift
Of which its dangers one must wary.

Our choices were deemed to us
By God for many reasons
Just as the earth's revolutions
Vary the seasons.

And this fills the young lad's mind
As well as his heart-filled breast
With thoughts of joy and contentment
His searching mind finally at rest.

Life is for the love of God,
Ever so-Forgiving
And the love of God
Makes life worth living.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

***"The Hour (Last Day) will not be established
until (religious) knowledge will be taken away
(by the death of religious learned men),
earthquakes will be very frequent, time will pass
quickly, afflictions will appear, murders will
increase and money will overflow amongst you."***

[Volume 2, Book 17, Number 146: Sahih Bukhari]

Khulafaa Rashideen

Models of Leadership

By Lubna R. Malik

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will, surely, make them successors in the earth, as He made successors from those who were before them; and that He will, surely, establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear.

(24:56, Al-Nur)

This verse from the Holy Qur'an is God's promise to protect the Muslim Community after the Holy Prophet Muhammad's death. God outlines how He rewards those who believe and do good works by making them Successors. Four individuals



This is a traditional study in Arabic calligraphy that comprises the names of Allah, Muhammad, and the four Noble Caliphs who succeeded Muhammad as leaders of the Muslim community, Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, and Ali.

who believed and engaged in good works and truly became "successors in the earth" are the *Khulafaa Rashideen*, or the *Rightly Guided Caliphs* who succeeded the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}. Through the historical accounts of these four grand leaders of the Muslim Community during the seventh century, one finds truly noble and heroic characteristics.

Abu Bakr: The Truthful, Forgiving and Brave (632-634)

The first caliph of Islam was Abdullah^{RA}, commonly known as Abu Bakr *Siddiq*. Born in 572C.E. in Mecca, Abu

Bakr^{RA} was renowned as a noble and equitable man and was highly respected by all who knew him. Abu Bakr^{RA} was also the Holy Prophet Muhammad's closest friend. In addition to his many accomplishments as caliph, such as expanding the Muslim territory and beginning the compilation the Holy Qur'an in written form, Abu Bakr^{RA} is most well-known for his truthfulness, forgiving nature, and unwavering bravery.

As suggested by his title, *Siddiq*, meaning truthful, Abu Bakr^{RA} was the first adult man to confirm and embrace the truth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's claim.¹ Abu Bakr's truthfulness, however, was much



deeper than his immediate acceptance of Muhammad^{SAW} as God's prophet. *Siddiq* connotes that one is constantly in a state of truthfulness. Thus, Abu Bakr^{RA} loved God and Islam so completely and so purely that his whole being exuded the truthfulness of Islam. The Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{AS}, has written on the special and unique quality of *Siddiqi*:

...all the doors leading to Prophethood have been closed except the door of *Sirat-e-Siddiqi*, i.e., losing oneself in the Holy Prophet.²

This quotation from the Promised Messiah's writing indicates that the only

way to attain the level of righteousness and piety necessary for prophetic status is through becoming truly *Siddiq*, that is immersing oneself in the love of God and Islam, just as Abu Bakr^{RA} had done in the seventh century.³

Following the Holy Prophet Muhammad's demise, Abu Bakr^{RA} was chosen as the first caliph of the Muslim community. One reason the Muslim Community chose Abu Bakr^{RA} was because of his extremely forgiving heart. On one occasion, a man slandered Abu Bakr's daughter, Ayesha^{RA}, who was also the Holy Prophet Muhammad's wife. Interestingly, this man relied on Abu Bakr's charitable donations to feed himself and his family. Upset with this man for insulting the Prophet's wife⁴, Abu Bakr^{RA} ceased financially supporting

this man. However, Abu Bakr's heart was so generous and forgiving that he soon resumed financially supporting the man and removed any negative feelings from his heart.⁵

Another reason the Muslim Community chose Abu Bakr^{RA} as the first leader after the Holy Prophet Muhammad's death was his unwavering bravery. Upon the Prophet's death, the Muslims were sad, shocked, and confused about the future of the Community. Seeing the Community in such deep grief over the Prophet's death, Abu Bakr^{RA} stood and addressed them all:

Whoever used to worship Muhammad, then let him know that

indeed Muhammad has died. And whosoever worships Allah, then Allah is alive and does not die. And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Verily, all Messengers have passed away before him. If then he dies, will you turn back on your heels?⁶

Even at this difficult and sad point in Muslim history, Abu Bakr^{RA} was not afraid to assert the truth that encompassed his being. He challenged his Muslim brothers and sisters to stand up and continue living Islam because the faith had not died with Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}. Abu Bakr^{RA} was the firm and steadfast heart of the Muslim Community that reassured them all.⁷

Abu Bakr's two-years as caliph of the Muslim Community that was constantly engaged in warfare with enemy states, dealing with internal strife as apostasy grew, and ensuring that the Qur'an's teachings and Prophet Muhammad's practice were properly followed are saturated with countless examples of his unwavering truthfulness, commitment to mercy and forgiveness, and his bravery against all odds.

Umar: The Humble and Compassionate (634-644)

Following Abu Bakr's demise, Umar^{RA} was elected caliph. Umar^{RA} had been one of the fiercest enemies of Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}; however, after hearing his sister recite a verse from the Holy Qur'an, he accepted Islam and became a great source of strength for the Muslim Community. Given the title of *Farooq*, or one who distinguishes between right and wrong, Umar's period as caliph has been called a golden period of Islamic history for all of its accomplishments, such as the establishment of the *Majlis-e-Shura* (consultative body of advisors to the caliph), the division of the Islamic state into provinces to facilitate administration, the establishment of a finance department, the building of schools and mosques, and the introduction of the Islamic calendar. Under Umar's leadership, the Muslim community also expanded to large parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Most notable of this formerly intolerant and violent man, however, was his humility and compassion.⁸

Umar^{RA} began his period as caliph with these words:

In running the State, you are my partners. Help me with your sound advice. If I follow the right path laid down by God and His Prophet, follow me. If I deviate, correct me. Strengthen me with your advice and suggestions.

This was the level of humility exhibited by the second caliph of Islam that, even though he had been chosen to lead the Muslims, he appealed to the Muslim Community to advise him and even correct him, should he make a mistake.

One example from Umar's period as caliph that encompasses both his humility and compassion is how he cared for the welfare of the people of Medina. Desiring to hear the true needs of society and offer his assistance wherever he could, Umar^{RA} used to disguise himself as a common person and walk around Medina at night. One such night Umar^{RA} observed a woman cooking while her children cried around her. Umar^{RA} soon found out that the woman and her children had been hungry for two days, and that the woman was not cooking, but merely pretending to cook over a fire to console her hungry children. Distraught at the state of this mother and her children, Umar^{RA} immediately went to the newly-established treasury and carried all of the food he could to the woman. On his way to the woman's home, one of Umar's servants stopped him and offered to carry the food load for Umar^{RA}. Umar^{RA}, however, responded:

No doubt you can carry this weight for me today, but who will carry my burden on the Day of Judgment?

Umar^{RA} then delivered the food to the woman who was so grateful that she exclaimed:

May God bless you. It would be far better if you were the Caliph of the Muslims, instead of Umar who is not aware of the condition of his people.

On hearing this, Umar^{RA} began crying

and left the woman's home without saying a word.⁹

This incident from Umar's life illustrates his deep compassionate nature and strong humility. First, because he was a truly compassionate leader who desired to improve the lives of his people, Umar^{RA} devised the idea of going out at night in disguise to help whoever he could. Second, Umar^{RA} helped his people, but without taking any credit for himself. Umar^{RA} went out at night in disguise because he did not want any recognition, he did not even consider allowing his servant to carry the load of food, and upon hearing the woman compliment him as an individual, he became so saddened that a Muslim sister thought better of a random stranger who helped her than the caliph, that he went away crying.

Umar's ten years as caliph of the Muslim Community speak volumes of his humility and compassion. Instances of Umar^{RA} exhibiting these characteristics, such as sharing in celebrations at child-birth, marrying his son to the most honest girl he found while on his night-patrol, giving his personal money to the poor and elderly, wearing the simplest clothing, living with no guards, eating dry bread, all fill his life before and during his period as caliph.

Uthman: The Ultimate Devotee to the Caliphate System (644-656)

As the Muslim Community entered its second decade under the caliphate system, Uthman^{RA} was elected the third caliph. Entitled *Ghani*, Uthman^{RA} was a very generous person, especially to the poor. Uthman's period as caliph is marked by further expansion of the Islamic Empire, repelling the Roman forces, establishing an Islamic naval fleet, and preparing standard copies of the Holy Qur'an. Uthman^{RA} is most remembered for his especially strong devotion to the caliphate system.¹⁰

During Uthman's period as caliph, there was great internal strife in the Muslim Community, especially with various Muslim groups asserting that Uthman^{RA} was not the rightful caliph. Thus, in addition to dealing with the enemies of Islam, Uthman^{RA} was constantly reinforcing the strength of the caliphate system. Uthman^{RA} addressed the Muslims:

Remain united. Let there be no dissension in your ranks. You were the enemies of one another. God blessed you with Islam, and you began to love one another, and became brothers. Maintain your unity. Do not break up into sections. Allah is happy with your unity, and exhorts you to refrain from disunity.

Thus, in spite of the division that was facing the now-partisan Muslim Community, Uthman^{RA} emphasized the dire need of unity for the future success of Islam.

In addition to emphasizing unity, Uthman^{RA} also remained devoted to the caliphate system and protecting pure Islam in his actions. During his period as caliph, certain sections of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities promoted propaganda against Uthman^{RA} and accused him of only placing his relatives in places of high office. Uthman^{RA} handled such accusations very delicately and always justified his appointments. For example, in Kufa, Iraq, Uthman^{RA} allowed Saad bin Abi Waqas, an appointment of Umar^{RA}, to continue governing. However, after it became clear that Saad was unable to control the volatile situation in Kufa due to internal Muslim conflict, Uthman^{RA} appointed his step-brother, Walid. Contrary to the conspirators' allegations, Uthman^{RA} appointed Walid because he was young, well-liked by the people of Kufa, and had firm faith in the caliphate system. Even so, five years later, Uthman^{RA} removed Walid upon request by the people of Kufa.

Similarly, in Basra, Iraq, Uthman^{RA} removed Abu Musa Asha'ari^{RA} only after the people of Basra demanded his removal. Aware of the controversy surrounding Walid's appointment, Uthman^{RA} asked the representatives of Basra to suggest a person to serve as their Governor. It was these representatives who requested Uthman's cousin, Abdullah bin Aamar, to serve as their Governor, not Uthman^{RA}. Thus, Uthman^{RA} proved that he was dedicated to protecting the caliphate system, and not his own familial interests.

Uthman's devotion to the caliphate system extended to his very last breath. The conspirators in the Muslim Community had created such unrest that some actu-

ally demanded that Uthman^{RA} step down as Caliph. Refusing to surrender to the enemies of Islam, Uthman^{RA} was murdered defending the caliphate system and Islam when he was stabbed while reciting the Holy Qur'an.¹¹ The words from his last sermon summarize the theme of his period as caliph and the message that he left for the world:

Remember that you were the enemies of one another, and under Islam, God made you like brothers. See that this unity is maintained at all costs.

Ali: The Peacemaker (656-662)

After Uthman's martyrdom, the Muslim Community was in complete disorder. Six days after Uthman's death, Ali^{RA} was chosen as the fourth caliph of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} and the Community swore allegiance to him. The son of Abu Talib and cousin to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, Ali^{RA} had played an integral role in Islamic history from the very beginning by being the first boy to accept Islam and by being a decoy in the Holy Prophet Muhammad's bed, while the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} escaped to Medina. As a caliph, Ali^{RA} quickly was placed in a position that required him to maintain unity among an increasingly splintering Muslim Community. Although his period as caliph was only six years, he strived to create peace in the Muslim Community.

At the beginning of his six years as caliph, Ali^{RA} was faced with the question of avenging Uthman's death. An influential group of Muslims pressured Ali^{RA} to punish Uthman's murderers. Ali^{RA}, however, announced to the Muslim Community that he only intended to restore peace and stability among the Muslims. Unconvinced, a group of Muslims led by Talha^{RA}, Zubair^{RA}, and Ayesha^{RA} fought against Ali's forces in the Battle of Jamal. Ultimately defeated, these three later felt deep regret at having challenged Ali's authority.¹²

Upon quelling that conflict, Ali^{RA} was faced with Amir Muawiyah and his companions who refused to pledge allegiance to Ali^{RA} until Uthman's murderers had been punished. Unhappy with Ali's desire to peacefully settle the issue, Muawiyah demanded that Ali's forces fight his own in the Battle of Siffin. After the battle ended, Muawiyah agreed to

peacefully decide the issue of punishing Uthman's murderers. Muawiyah and his companions, however, did not abide by the terms of the agreement and created greater rebellion in the Muslim Community that Ali^{RA} was desperately trying to keep stable and peaceful. From this rebellion, the Kharij Muslims separated.¹³

In response to this separation, Ali^{RA} tried again to peacefully reassemble the Muslim Community. Left with no other option, Ali^{RA} engaged in battle against the Kharij in which most of the Kharij died. Although Ali^{RA} had worked very hard to keep peace within the community, the Kharij were determined to destroy any progress Ali^{RA} had made and plotted to assassinate him. Thus, one day as Ali^{RA} was walking to the mosque for the morning prayer, he was fatally wounded and passed away the next month.¹⁴

Desiring only to create peace in the Muslim Community and re-establish the beautiful unity that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} had brought, Ali^{RA} faced a difficult and tumultuous six years as caliph. Although ultimately the Muslim Community decided to separate into groups and political factions, Ali's period as caliph marks the suppression of many rebellions and maintenance of some level of stability.

In conclusion, the thirty year caliphate system that followed the Holy Prophet Muhammad's death and the charismatic and righteous leaders that led the Muslim Community illustrate the true qualities of leadership—truthfulness, forgiveness, bravery, humility, compassion, devotion, and peacemaking. Although the Muslim Community failed to remain unified in the end due to various political and territorial reasons, the lives of these four rightly-guided caliphs are excellent examples of true leadership.♦

(Endnotes)

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“As a Muslim who understands the sanctity of human life through the Quranic principle, ‘He who killed one life is as though he killed humanity,’ I strongly condemn such heinous acts.”

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Pakistan Must Start Condemning Terrorism

By Faheem Younus Qureshi
Baltimore, Maryland

Now that the world knows that attacks on innocent civilians in Mumbai were perpetrated by Islamic militants of Pakistani origin, we the Muslims are left soul-searching once again.

As a Muslim who understands the sanctity of human life through the Quranic principle, ‘He who killed one life is as though he killed humanity,’ I strongly condemn such heinous acts.

The Pakistani government, however, still distances itself from taking any responsibility for repeated tragedies caused by their home-grown militia.

One could argue that such repugnant acts are deeply condoned by Pakistan’s constitution. Under the cloak of blasphemy laws, hundreds of members of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community were subjected to target killings in Pakistan and the government did just what they did this time: Offer a soft, political condemnation.

That Pakistan should cooperate with the investigation and follow the evidence wherever it leads is a very achievable expectation set by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

However, Pakistan does not have a track record of following through. As a

first step, Pakistan must repeal the blasphemy laws under the constitutional amendment of 1984, which are the root cause of its most unwanted export product.

Originally printed in the 12/02/08 edition of *USA Today*

Muslims Advocate Peace

By Dr. Sohail Husain,
Meriden, Connecticut

Mumbai, the largest city in India, was recently paralyzed by terror as militants triggered a network of bombs and raided several key public and tourist locations. While their identities are being sorted out, members of groups of this type generally claim to represent Islam and the body of Muslims.

I am an American Muslim of Indian descent, and I strongly disagree. Voices of dissent such as mine and many other Muslims have long been drowned out by the clamor on prime-time news of these misguided and ignorant extremists. They not only took hostage tourists in their hotels, but they also, in effect, have taken hostage the wider Muslim communities that they claim to lead by proxy.

Well, enough is enough. Islam does not condone your acts of terror, and we are not with you. In fact, our religion condemns your cowardly violence on civilians, and we implore you to stop.

The prayers of this Muslim and former Indian national go out to the victims of Mumbai. The only extremism we can tolerate is peace, as stated last week in southern India by Mirza Masroor Ahmad, a prominent Muslim and head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Islam does not condone your acts of terror, and we are not with you. In fact, our religion condemns your cowardly violence on civilians, and we implore you to stop.



Four children and one man were arrested on false charge of blasphemy. (Persecution Website)

People must protest atrocities in the name of religion

Originally printed in the 2/12/09 edition of the Kenosha News, Wisconsin

By Amtul R. Ahmad M.D.,
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Four children and one man were arrested on false charge of blasphemy. Pakistan Law 295C says that a person can be imprisoned for life or given a death penalty according to the Blasphemy law, which was amended to imprison an innocent and law abiding sect of Muslims.

The false accusation is that these children wrote the name of the Holy Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, on the toilet walls in a mosque in Layyah Pakistan. The fact is these children did not even live in the area of that Mosque and neither they had visited that area.

This is another evidence of how democracy and justice in Pakistan is bowing and succumbing to the extremist Fundamentalists and Muslim radicals.

Asma Jahangiri, the chairwoman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the special Rapporteur of The United Nation’s Commission on Human Rights, has also condemned this arrest and has called it “heinous.”

It is time that peace loving people should raise their voices against these atrocities in the name of religion because it is unacceptable to involve innocent children especially without any evidence pointing towards them.

How Many Must Die Before Peace Prevails?

Originally published in *The Oregonian*, January 5, 2009

By Harris Zafar

When Palestinians and Israelis both pray to God for help in destroying the other, who does God choose to help? Which of the two are the “good guys”? Well, based on the actions of both parties, I fail to see why God would help either of them. Both parties claim loyal adherence to God and his teachings, but sadly, both parties violate the law of their respective faith. Let’s look at the facts.

As a practicing Muslim, I’m critical of Muslims who don’t act according to the teachings of Islam. So let’s begin with Hamas. Sure, some may argue the case of Gaza residents having their food, water and medical equipment supply cut off by Israel. Others may cite the Nov. 5 Israeli attack

under the Gaza fence. But how does it help to fire rockets in return? Each rocket has the possibility of taking an innocent life, which is strictly forbidden in Islam.

Do those who fire them not understand the Holy Quran when it repeatedly says “create not disorder in the earth” or even when it says that killing even one person is like killing all of mankind? Reverence for life is a part of Islam, but the very nature of rockets is to put lives at risk.

And what about the Israeli Defense Forces? How can its leaders justify their response when their actions are breaking the very law they claim to follow? The Mosaic law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” teaches the principle of equitable retaliation.

The purpose of this law was to limit the scope of a punishment and to discourage cruelty. Yet Israel has unleashed an all-out attack of warlike proportions, killing more than 400 Palestinians and wounding more than 2,000 more in merely seven days. Can we consider the death of 400 Palestinians

in response to the death of four Israelis to be equitable retaliation? Both Israelis and Palestinians are religious people, but when it comes to matters concerning one another, their respective leaders toss their religious beliefs to the side and act with raw emotion, with disregard for the value of life. Israel and Palestine both consist of men, women and children who desire peace and security instead of violence and fear. Their respective faiths, as well as the principle of rationality, dictate that each must refrain from using violence to solve their problems.

True peace can only be achieved by working together as children of God. If both parties instilled humanity, mercy and forgiveness into themselves, perhaps God would find more value in their prayers. But how many must die before the God-given qualities of humanity and peace prevail?

◆Harris Zafar, a business analyst in the information technology industry, is the youth director of faith outreach within his mosque in Southwest Portland.

“It is our duty to bow before God Almighty who has the ability to change what is in a person’s heart. It is incumbent upon all of you to inform the people of the world that Islam teaches love for God and for His Creation. Inform the world that the followers of the Promised Messiah do not use swords or violence but will change people’s hearts through love and affection.”

His Holiness, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, delivered the concluding address to the 85th Annual Convention of the Bangladesh Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat. His Holiness spoke of the continued persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat both in Bangladesh and in other countries. -- Feb. 15th, 2009.

Despite sharing a unique ancestry, today the children of Abraham^{AS} seem to be the people most at odds with one another. This is most apparent in the ongoing unrest in the Middle East. Despite its seeming hopelessness, the Middle East gave birth to one of its greatest sons in 1138 C.E. whose example illustrated the importance of humanity over hierarchy, and valued compassion over cruelty. That prodigal son was Salah-ud-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub [known in the West as *Saladin*].

Muslim Sectarianism

Prior to Salah-ud-Din's birth, ethnic and tribal loyalties 'controlled' the Muslim empire. In Egypt, the Fatimid Caliphate had been reduced to figureheads. Inevitably, a powerless Shi'i government ruling over a majority Sunni population was bound to fall. So too was the case with the entire Muslim empire. In 1095 C.E., Crusaders captured Jerusalem. Thereafter, Muslim rulers allied with the Franks against their own Muslim neighbors.¹ This was the 'empire' Salah-ud-Din inherited – riddled with sectarian strife, whose epicenter foreigners controlled, and one which housed a corrupt spiritual head.

At age twenty-five, Salah-ud-Din was instrumental in quelling yet another Christian-Muslim alliance, this time between Amalric I, King of Jerusalem, and the Fatimid Caliph's vizier.² Salah-ud-Din further crushed numerous Frankish attacks, including another Amalric-led invasion in violation of a treaty, liberating Egypt in the process.³

Following these expeditions Salah-ud-Din

Salah-ud-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub

by Sardar Anees Ahmad



"He treated his prisoners generously, set them free, and sent many of them away with gifts. The wounded, especially, owed their lives to his care, and many were eager to enter his service. As for the rich booty of the enemy's camp, he gave it all to the army, and kept not a thing for himself.

became Egypt's vizier, occupying a precarious position. One who had never sought political power was now responsible for offsetting the jealousies of his elders, suppressing

international and intra-national uprisings, and balancing the religious differences of a Shi'i Caliph and Sunni King.

Accordingly, Salah-ud-Din first surrounded himself with close relatives. By appointing his siblings to rule over fiefs Egyptian statesman previously held, Salah-ud-Din took a firm step towards weakening a corrupt government and earning the public's support. Ever the soldier-general, Salah-ud-Din made it a point to emulate Spartan Rule.⁴ Salah-ud-Din also received petitions with his own hand from all over Egypt, every Monday and Thursday, even during travel. Salah-ud-Din mandated that jurists and qazis be present to uphold an unbiased application of the law. Salah-ud-Din rarely ignored a grievance, even if levied against Salah-ud-Din himself.⁵ Even if the charge levied against Salah-ud-Din was dismissed, the complainant received a robe of honor and had his travel expenses paid for.⁶

His gestures were very opportune. For nearly ten years following his appointment to vizier, Salah-ud-Din had to crush various assassination attempts and mutinies in Egypt and the Middle East.⁷ Yet with each victory the attachment between the Kurdish statesmen and his subjects grew. Of the Syrian conquest, Stanley Lane-Poole writes, "He treated his prisoners generously, set them free, and sent many of them away with gifts. The wounded, especially, owed their lives to his care, and many were eager to enter his service. As for the rich booty of the enemy's camp, he gave it all to the army, and kept not a thing for himself. In this he displayed alike the instincts of a generous nature and the foresight of a statesman. He bound both his own troops and the enemy's to him with ties of gratitude and personal devotion. The prisoners he had freed, some of whom were men of rank and influence, went back to their homes ... full of his praises, extolling his clemency and great heartedness, and prepared to be his willing subjects".⁸

During this period, the threat of a Crusader invasion matured.⁹ An imposing Greek-Frank alliance preemptively attacked Egypt. Yet again, Salah-ud-Din fought off the attacks.¹⁰ This victory confirmed Salah-ud-Din's status amongst the public, and soon after he was asked to aid in the shift of spiritual leadership to the Abbasid Sunni Caliphate, ending a two-hundred year Shi'i Fatimid rule.

Thus, Salah-ud-Din was able to rid Arab lands of foreign rulers, eliminate sectarian strife, and allow for a markedly peaceful transition of religious authority.¹¹

Pluralism

Salah-ud-Din was a confirmed Sunni Muslim, yet he never compelled anyone to accept Islam or punished them for refusing to convert. When an Ismailia assassination attempt failed,¹² Salah-ud-Din took no revenge on his Shiite brethren.¹³ One can visit the various Damascene monasteries¹⁴ or perhaps still see Psalms (145:13) inscribed on a mosque's wall – all a result of Salah-ud-Din's tolerant rule.¹⁵ Once, on receiving the Lord of Sidon, Salah-ud-Din dined with him and engaged in a lengthy discussion on the merits of accepting Islam.¹⁶ On another occasion, Reginald of Sidon deceptively pledged his allegiance to Salah-ud-Din and engaged in lengthy religious discussion with Salah-ud-Din for months. Meanwhile, Reginald's plan to allow King Guy to attack Acre matured – resulting in 4,000 Christian and 1,500 Muslim deaths. Despite his actions, Reginald was only arrested – Salah-ud-Din took no action regarding his false interests in Islam.¹⁷

Following Jerusalem's conquest, Salah-ud-Din ensured a safe passage for all Christian pilgrims, despite the presence of vengeful Muslim soldiers.¹⁸ No churches were harmed,¹⁹ monasteries and priests were welcome²⁰, Christians possessed the right to pilgrimage and were exempt from taxation²¹, and ultimately Muslims and non-Muslims enjoyed equal access to Jerusalem.²² Salah-ud-Din himself entertained many pilgrims despite being very sick and elderly.²³ Balian's squire remarked, "Never did Saladin show himself greater than during this memorable surrender. His guards ... kept order in every street ... insomuch that no ill-usage of the Christians was ever heard of."²⁴

On one occasion, Salah-ud-Din welcomed the Bishop of Salisbury to Jerusalem and offered him a house free of cost, which was respectfully turned down. Salah-ud-Din sent the bishop many gifts, instructed his companions to treat the bishop with the utmost respect, and invited him to a social gathering. After a long conversation, Salah-ud-Din bade the bishop to request any gift he liked. The bishop requested that two Latin priests and deacons (with similar requests for Bethlehem and Nazareth) be permitted to celebrate service with the Syrians at the 'Lord's Sepulchre'. Salah-ud-Din consented to all his wishes.²⁵

His Jewish brethren, while completely powerless, received no less a loving treatment – Salah-ud-Din granting Jews the right of resettlement.²⁶ In fact, he was echoing his predecessors' treatment towards Egyptian Jews, who lived an autonomous life for genera-



In victory and defeat, Salah-ud-Din demonstrated a masterful conquering of the self. He valued life, and did his utmost to obtain peace as quickly as possible. Literally countless incidents exist of Salah-ud-Din meeting Crusaders, in times of peace or war, free or captive, regardless of rank, with honor and arranging banquets for them.

tions.²⁷ Aside from the famous Maimonides who was Salah-ud-Din's personal physician,²⁸ other famous physicians also flourished under Salah-ud-Din such as Abu al-Ma'ali and

al-Mudawwar.²⁹ Truly, Salah-ud-Din, like Umar^{RA} before him,³⁰ fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7).

Remember, religious tolerance was unprecedented during this period of history. For example, following Acre's conquest in 1187, Salah-ud-Din oversaw the first prayers in three generations offered in a mosque that had been converted into a church. These were "the first Moslem prayers ... offered on the coast of Palestine since (the) first Crusaders."³¹ Following Jerusalem's conquest, the golden cross was removed from the Dome of the Rock as well as all traces of the Templars' additions to the Haraam of Umar's Mosque.³² Even Salah-ud-Din's predecessor, Nur-ud-Din, whom William of Tyre considered just, was a great oppressor of Christians.³³ Lastly, while Muslims and Christians coexisted amicably in Jerusalem following the First Crusade, fanaticism soon followed.³⁴ It was Salah-ud-Din who demonstrated, to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, what tolerance truly was.

Amnesty

In victory and defeat, Salah-ud-Din demonstrated a masterful conquering of the self. He valued life, and did his utmost to obtain peace as quickly as possible. Literally countless incidents exist of Salah-ud-Din meeting Crusaders, in times of peace or war, free or captive, regardless of rank, with honor and arranging banquets for them.³⁵ He was fond of clothing his guests in the finest of robes in an expression of brotherhood. As with the Muslims, when dealing with the Crusaders Salah-ud-Din, "never refused to grant terms when an enemy wished to surrender."³⁶ He "never broke a treaty in his life"³⁷ and in every case granted honorable terms.³⁸

Once, a Frank prisoner was brought trembling before Saladin, and cried out, "Before I saw his face I was sore afraid, but now that I have seen him I know he will do me no harm." Indeed, Salah-ud-Din freed the knight.³⁹ After Balian fled from defeat at Hattin in 1187, he begged Salah-ud-Din to grant him safe-conduct to Jerusalem and bring his wife and children back to Tyre. The petition was immediately granted, on the condition that Balian should never bear arms against Salah-ud-Din. However, when Balian arrived at Jerusalem the clergy overturned his oath. Despite violating his oath, when Balian again begged Salah-ud-Din to grant his wife and children safe-conduct to Tripoli, Salah-ud-Din sent an escort of fifty horses to carry out his wishes.⁴⁰

At Kerak in 1189, soldiers sold their women and children and resorted to eating their horses. Salah-ud-Din bought these women

and children their freedom and safely sent them to Christian lands.⁴¹ During the Battle of Spring Head in 1190, when the outcome was very uncertain, Salah-ud-Din received captured ranking officers with stately courtesy, clothed them in robes of honor, allowed them to write to their camp for any needs, and sent them to Damascus. Truly, "It was better to be the guest of Saladin than to shiver and starve in a Christian tent."⁴²

Salah-ud-Din's compassionate gestures were simply unmatched: "Treaties with the soldiers of the Cross ... were worse than useless ... (as) no faith need be kept with the 'infidel'; and scarcely had they concluded the pact ... when they began to ravage the beautiful valley of the Litany."⁴³ For example, after pardoning King Guy on the condition that Guy never bear arms against Salah-ud-Din, Guy had the clergy nullify his oath and once again attacked Salah-ud-Din.⁴⁴ Again, Salah-ud-Din granted amnesty to the King of Jerusalem provided he never bear arms against Salah-ud-Din. In turn, the king conspired with the marquis of Montferrat in mounting another attack.⁴⁵

King Richard the Lion Hearted of England, upon promising not to harm Muslim captives at Acre in 1189, massacred every soldier, woman, child, and elder.⁴⁶ This was the same Richard who, upon falling ill, asked that Salah-ud-Din send him fresh fruit with snow.⁴⁷ During the Battle of Jaffa, in which the Muslims suffered defeat, Saladin sent Richard two steeds as replacements for falling off his horse.⁴⁸ On yet another occasion, Richard underscored Saladin's graciousness in the hopes of receiving a church. In turn, Saladin granted Richard the Church of the Resurrection.⁴⁹ Poole notes, "After Saladin's almost quixotic acts of clemency and generosity, the King of England's cruelty will appear amazing ... (but) in this struggle the virtues of civilization, magnanimity, toleration, real chivalry, and gentle culture, were all on the side of the Saracens."⁵⁰

When the first Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099, defenseless Muslims and Jews were tortured, burnt, shot, or expelled.⁵¹ In return, Saladin, like his namesake Yusuf (Joseph), pardoned his erring brothers⁵² and safely escorted them to Christian land. All who were able paid a ransom, while Saladin and his companions liberated the tens of thousands who remained.⁵³ Balian's squire writes, "I shall tell you of the great courtesy which Saladin showed to the wives and daughters of knights ... When Saladin saw them weeping, he ... wept himself for pity. And he

bade the ladies whose husbands were alive to tell him where they were captives, and as soon as he could go to the prisons he would set them free. (And all were released wherever they were found.) After that he (gave) the dames and damsels whose lords were dead ... so much that they gave praise to God and published abroad the kindness and honour which Saladin had done to them."⁵⁴ Of Saladin's magnanimous conquest, Poole comments, "Fortunate were the merciless, for they obtained mercy at the hands of the Moslem Sultan. If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-hearted conqueror of his own, and perhaps of any, age."⁵⁵

Salah-ud-Din's attachment to justice did not waiver, even with the most vehement anti-Arab factions. Reynald de Chatillon, Lord of Kerak, repeatedly attacked pilgrims and trade caravans during periods of truce, simply because they were "Saracens". Reynald also attempted to invade Arabia to destroy the Kaaba and the tomb of "the accursed camel-driver".⁵⁶ Despite Reynald's actions, Saladin never violated the laws of war. For example, during a wedding in Kerak in 1184, Saladin unsuccessfully attempted to capture Reynald. Still, no civilians were targeted.⁵⁷ On the victory at Hattin in 1187, both King Guy and Reynald were brought before Saladin. Guy complained of thirst, and Saladin ordered a cup of sherbet for him.⁵⁸ Saladin then ordered a dinner reception for both men, and afterwards summoned them once again and killed Reynald. Saladin calmed Guy, declaring "It is not the wont of kings to kill kings; but that man had transgressed all bounds."⁵⁹ Such was the magnanimous nature of Saladin, observing justice even towards the most undeserving of foes.

Salah-ud-Din passed away and was buried in a ceremony fitting not a king, but a pauper, on Wednesday, March 4th, 1193.⁶⁰ His legacy compelled even the French and English, whose forces he opposed throughout his life, to remember him in various romances. Even Dante's acidic tongue could utter nothing but praise for Saladin. It was his example, demonstrating the plausibility of coexistence amongst all the children of Abraham, which earned him this praise and which can serve as guidepost for Muslims, Christians, and Jews today. ♦



The Golden Age of Islam

Islamic history when science and learning flourished

By Arshad M. Khan, Ph.D

This article focuses on the period of medieval Islamic history when science and learning flourished in what some scholars have dubbed as “The Golden Age of Islam”. Since one of the main beliefs emphasized in Islam is to value the seeking of knowledge, and this value played an important role in the formation of the scientific enterprise in Islamic civilization, it is perhaps appropriate to begin our discussion by first examining this topic further.

In this regard, one of the more satisfying explanations of the statement, “Seek knowledge even if from China” has recently been furnished by the historian James E. Lindsay, who notes that it emphasizes the relationship between travel and education in early Islamic culture.¹ Although its authenticity as being a true *hadith* has been questioned², Lindsay’s point remains valid, since the first portion of the statement, namely

that of seeking knowledge, has been emphasized on numerous occasions in other, more authentic *ahadith* by the holy prophet of Islam³. Thus, the great medieval Persian scholar al-Tirmidhi records in his *Sunan Al-Tirmidhi* that *hadhrat Anas*^{ra} relates that the holy prophet Muhammad^{sa} said: “He who issues forth in search of knowledge is busy in the cause of Allah till he returns from his quest”³. Notice how in this *hadith*, too, travel is emphasized in relation to the seeking of knowledge. Lindsay describes how this emphasis on movement, intertwined with knowledge seeking, was often associated with the pilgrimage to Mecca, and became a dominant cultural aspect of medieval Islam:

This desire to travel in order to study with the masters was often coupled with the obligation to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once if one

is able. In addition to being the means for many to fulfill one of the five pillars of Islam, pilgrimage caravans from such distant places as Spain, West Africa, Central Asia, India, and elsewhere functioned as informal traveling universities that continually added new scholars as they made their way to Mecca and back each year.⁴

It has been argued that the effort to travel in order to seek knowledge (*talab al-ilm*) was so pervasive in medieval Islamic culture, that its very existence provides historians with a strong argument to study this dynamic period of history using a comparative approach, in which cultures and traditions of several countries and peoples are examined in relation to one another⁵: in this case, all of the territories of the diverse Islamic empire, which stretched (at its furthest) from *al-Andalus* (Spain) to *al-Hind* (India)⁶. In the discussion that follows regarding the history of the scientific enterprise within this vast tract of land, this important relation between travel and education will be emphasized. This is because many of the leading scholars of this time period spent most of their lives traveling through the Islamic empire, moving from territory to territory, and acquiring information wherever they traveled. Coupled with the travels of Muslims during the pilgrimage to Mecca were the many other contributing factors of increased travel across the Islamic lands, especially increased trade and commerce along various caravan and shipping routes over land and sea.⁷ Together, these efforts in movement through the variety of landscapes and cultures, comprising what is now known as the full extent of Islamic civilization, took advantage of an almost unprecedented richness of diverse opinions, sensibilities and resources.

The International Character of Science in Early Islamic History

Scholars have posited that it was this richness of diversity (and its widespread support and tolerance) that was an important cause of the rapid increases in learning and advancement that characterized these six centuries of Islamic rule.⁸ Others have further argued that at least part of the enduring character of the scientific enterprise during this time may have had something to do with Islam’s focus on the unity of Nature, which allowed its denizens to absorb similar messages of unity from diverse traditions, including

those of the Greeks, Chaldeans, Persians, Indians and Chinese.⁹ Still others, including the Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, felt that, on a practical level, widespread patronage of the scientific enterprise by wealthy officials in various dynastic courts throughout the lands under Islamic rule also had much to do with science's continued rise during this era.¹⁰ Perhaps all of these factors played a role. A. I. Sabra notes for example that although the non-Muslim Hunayn and Thabit families of Baghdad during the Abbasid caliphate translated many Greek works into Arabic, "their activity as translators was positively and generously supported (not just tolerated) by the Muslim ruling establishment – the caliphal court itself and individuals closely associated with it."¹¹

Whatever the reasons were, this period was marked by advances in many fields of science and technology that were achieved both by non-Muslim and Muslim scientists, philosophers, and thinkers throughout the Islamic empire. It must be emphasized here that many of these individuals were Muslim, Christian, Jewish, etc. in terms of culture rather than religion *per se*. Many were hardly ascetic or deeply religious, whereas others were devout followers of their faiths. Thus, the notion that this "Golden Age" of progress in Islamic civilization was only the result of a devout adherence to faith is a misleading one. Rather, if any benefit was derived from the "Islamic" nature of the civilization in which these advances were made, it was that the transformative flowering of the medieval mind occurred because of the tolerance, intercommunication, and open culture of freely expressed opinion that was encouraged under Islamic rule during this time. I now describe two individuals who were famous for such expression, and who transformed the fields of philosophy and medicine: Al-Kindi and Ibn Sina.

al-Kindi

The first of the Muslim philosopher-scientists, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, was from the Kindah tribe in Arabia and spent his early life in Kufa, where his ancestors had settled and where his father was governor.¹² The historian Hugh Kennedy notes that he later had moved to Baghdad, where he was appreciated and admired by patrons among the Abbasid court, and Zimmerman states that he was believed to serve at some point in the capacity of tutor to the caliph's son, Ahmad.¹³ Kennedy writes of al-Kindi's accomplishments:

Though not a translator himself, he was the first man to use Aristotle's work to create an Islamic, Arabic-language philosophical discourse. He was also the first to confront the problems of reconciling faith and reason... As well as philosophy, he wrote on mathematics, astronomy, music and medicine; the main hospital in modern Baghdad is named after him.... From the twelfth century many of his works were translated into Latin, usually in Spain, and circulated widely in European universities: some of his writings, in fact, only survive in Latin versions.¹⁴

Importantly, al-Kindi was a strong advocate of a pluralist society and an open critic of religious bigotry.¹⁵ Still, others have commented on how he believed that while "the educated elite could be guided by reason, the less-advantaged masses only by faith."¹⁶ In contrast to, or in spite of this view, al-Kindi was a staunch opponent of the mystical aspects of alchemy (and thus predates the like-minded English scientist Robert Boyle, who wrote the *Sceptical Chymist*, by nearly nine centuries). Lindberg describes al-Kindi as "a leader in the endeavor to communicate Greek learning to Islam" who, nevertheless, challenged Euclid's theories of optics and vision with his own ideas about the subject.¹⁷

Ibn Sina

Abu Ali al-Husain bin Abdallah bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Sina was born in Afshana, which is located near Bukhara in present day Uzbekistan. A child prodigy, he had memorized the Qur'an by the age of 10, and he was exposed to medicine as a career and discipline a few years later. By the age of sixteen, he was "to all intents and purposes instructing the students himself."¹⁸ Following the death of his father, Ibn Sina traveled extensively, arriving finally in various cities in Persia, where he provided his medical services to wealthy patrons.¹⁹ Writing in his famous five volume history of science in 1927, Sarton calls Ibn Sina "the most famous scientist of Islam and one of the most famous of all races, places and times; one may say that his thought represents the climax of mediaeval philosophy."²⁰ His greatest work was set forth in his *al-Qanun fi'l-tibb* (known in Europe as the *Canon*), a monumental text which organized medical knowledge into five parts: generalities; herbal and other medical remedies; diseases, head to toe; diseases not specific to a single organ; and compound drugs.²¹ An "immense encyclopaedia of medicine (of about a million words), a codification of the whole of ancient and Muslim knowledge"²², Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun*

would remain influential as the medical text taught in European medical schools for six centuries, and probably was the most widely used medieval medical reference.²³ Nasr comments:

[Ibn Sina] possessed much clinical insight, and is given credit for the first description of several drugs and diseases, such as meningitis, which he was the first to describe correctly. But it is essentially for his penetration and for his understanding of the philosophical principles of medicine, on the one hand, and his mastery of the psychological treatment of physical ailments, or of "psychosomatic medicine" as it is called today, on the other hand, that he is celebrated.²⁴◆

Concluding Remarks

In the space permitted, it is impossible to provide even a cursory overview summarizing six centuries of scientific progress under Islamic rule. It is hoped that the biographical sketches of al-Kindi and Ibn Sina presented in this article, as well as the biographical descriptions of other luminaries presented in the remainder of this issue, will provide the reader with some insights about achievements during this epic period of world history.

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For the Love of God

We never know what insignificant act of kindness opens the floodgates of God's Mercy on the day we find ourselves in need.

I have seen poor people standing on the side of streets whether I am taking a stroll on Kalakaua Avenue in Honolulu, walking through Bourbon Street in New Orleans or rushing to the train station on Madison Avenue in Chicago. Some of them could be homeless as well; I couldn't tell.

Helping the poor is part of the reason congregations are asked to give God's share of the money in mosques, churches, synagogues and temples. There are comedians who make jokes that if God is the Most Powerful, Mighty and the King of kings, why does He need money. I find jokes about God distasteful. Taking advantage of the freedom of speech in our nation, some make a living making indecent remarks in public. No matter which amendment you use, distasteful expressions are just that.

I know, by definition, God does not need any money. So why are we asked to give Him money or why does He ask us to give to others? Why couldn't He give some to the poor and keep us out of the loop. That would keep



our conscience clear.

I have discovered that when I don't understand something about God, I look at it in the concept of love and it becomes manifestly clear. When my Christian friends ask me why I don't eat pork, I don't get in the debate over what is and isn't wrong with pork. I tell them that I don't eat it because God has asked me to refrain from it. For the love of Him, I have given up just one meat. I have plenty of other meats to select from: lamb, beef, chicken and fish. If my children cannot stand lamb kidneys or brains, we don't cook them at home. Not because we can't but because our feelings for our children. So why is it so strange that I gave up one item of food for the affection and love of God?

It all has to do with the joys and feelings of love for someone.

A father walks into his home after work with a box of chocolates in his hand. He gives it to his four year old son and tells him that he brought the chocolates he loves so much for him. The smile on the son's face is only part of the reason he does it.

Before the toddler has even opened the box, his father tells him to share it with his older brother and sister. Then he watches him. If he goes ahead and gives a few pieces to his siblings, the father's eyes light up with pride and happiness. He says *thank you* to him. As soon as the toddler has put the first piece of chocolate in his mouth, the father asks, "Aren't you going to give me some also?"

It is his proud moment again when he gets the candy from his son. In case the toddler refuses, the father shows his displeasure and threatens no more chocolates. Most sons give up. Just the thought of being deprived in the future scares them.

What is wrong with this picture? Why do

fathers all over the world do this intuitively? Why don't they simply divide up the candies equally among the children, have some for themselves and everybody would be happy?

They do it to spread the feelings of love. In this simple episode, feelings of love are generated among the siblings, father and son and the bonds of family are strengthened.

When God gives us wealth and then tells us to share it with our brothers and sisters and spend for him, it is to spread love among humanity. Is it any different than what fathers do everyday in all cultures?

We need to share with others to create love and affection in the world. I know I should do more to help the poor brothers and sisters. I could, from time to time, spend a twenty dollar bill and buy 20 double cheeseburgers from McDonald's dollar menu and offer them to twenty poor people outside a soup kitchen. I am sure eating soup everyday gets monotonous. Double cheeseburgers could bring out some smiles. It takes initiative, time and effort but it is worth the love it would generate.

Small amounts can make big differences. Imagine the love a five dollar box of chocolates creates in a household. A hundred dollars could bring surprising results.

My sincere wish is that my words prompt you to feed some poor brother or sister for the love of God, regardless of the street or city you find yourself in. We never know what insignificant act of kindness opens the floodgates of God's Mercy on the day we find ourselves in need. On that note, I think I'll go to Honolulu next month and feed some homeless people on the beach.

Just for the love of God.

Falahud Din Shams



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